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Novel (early) anon.

Lady Barker,

Nov 30 1860

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CONSTANCE:

A NOVEL.

THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

ON MY STRAIN
PERHAPS SOME COLD FASTIDIOUS JUDGE
CASTS A DISDAINFUL EYE, AND CALLS MY TOIL,
AND CALLS THE LOVE AND BEAUTY WHICH I SING
THE DREAM OF FOLLY. AKENSIDE.



VOLUME I.

L O N D O N :

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WH O wrote *CONSTANCE*? is the utmost eulogium the author expects; and for this favour, should it be conferred on her, gratitude inclines her to make all prudent return, by declaring the inutility of the inquiry. She may confidently say it is a secret not to be developed, yet thus far the curious shall be indulged. She is of a family who have served and been eminently rewarded by their country; in a situation of life which renders solicitude for the morrow not only superfluous but criminal; and of a disposition to seek pleasure in the recesses of knowledge; she is made more conspicuous by her connections than by her own merit, and may venture to suppose that did she avail herself of native advantages, a desire to learn whether literary endowments are hereditary would supply the want of other attractives, and procure her the attention which she has now no right to ask.

P R E F A C E.

THAT the following composition was begun without the most distant view to its publication, that the author wants experience and judgment, and has not courage to face criticism, would be better reasons for its suppression than excuses for its defects : suppressed it might probably have been, but for the encouragement of a friend, who, when a part of the manuscript had been destroyed in despair of succeeding in the attempt, urged a re-commencement of it, and kindly fanned the almost extinguished flame of emulation.

To undertake while conscious of inability to perform, argues presumption ; but to offer incompetency as a claim to the extension of applause is folly : this work is therefore submitted to the candor of its readers without apology ; since those, if any such can be found, who think it not undeserving of commendation will desire none, those who censure it will accept none.

But there is a species of merit to which it boldly pretends : it boasts a tendency perfectly innoxious ; it promulgates no doctrine that may not be received with advantage ; it represents human life as diversified with good and evil ; it patronises no vice ; it rewards virtue, and it inculcates a truth, which it were to be wished abler pens would enforce,
that

that a dominion over our passions is in all instances conducive to our happiness.

Whether innocence of design will be admitted in lieu of skill, whether it will compensate for failure in the execution, remains to be proved. No projected schemes will be frustrated, should it be rejected; no ambition will be disappointed: obscurity, the faithful friend of timidity, will shield the writer, whose desires will be abundantly gratified if her labours can render less tedious one hour of convalescence, deceive the duration of suspense, or which perhaps is a higher point than she can aim at, should they cheer one disciple of adversity.

With respect to the work itself she is aware that it has many blemishes; but she will not pay the sagacity of her readers so ill a compliment as to point them out; nor does she think it necessary that she should acknowledge to whom she is indebted for some poetical quotations, the writers from whom she has borrowed them being too well known to need naming.

However she may have erred, she trusts she is exempt from the dishonesty of plagiarism: a very confined acquaintance with similar compositions may produce likeness as well as originality; but any design of that kind she can with truth disclaim, and will only refer such as suspect her to the observations of an ingenuous annotator on Spencer, that parallelists often mistake *resemblances* for *thefts*.

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To deny intended personality seems a necessary and almost unmeaning form ; but whether it gains credit or is disbelieved, an assurance that there is not a portrait in the work, and that she would rather commit the whole to the flames than give a moment's uneasiness to any one, is due to society in general, and a satisfaction to herself as an individual.

C O N S T A N C E.

C H A P. I.

R E T I R E M E N T.

THE beginning of January was the time chosen by Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzathur, for their daughter to set out on her promised visit to her aunt, Mrs. Stavenell. All things were prepared for her leaving Marstonbury; she rose on the important morning with sensations of delight, to which she had hitherto been a stranger; and no music ever sounded so sweetly in Constance's ears, as the words which communicated the happy tidings that the chaise was ready.

She had entered her twenty-first year, and had never yet slept out of the house where she was born; nor would she now have been suffered to leave home, but for the entreaties of Mrs. Stavenell, aided by her own wishes, and enforced by

VOL. I. B the

the necessity, of which her father and mother were aware, that she should be in some measure acquainted with the world : these had prevailed on them to do violence to their parental affection, by submitting to a temporary separation from her in whom all their hopes centered, and to whom every care, every wish was directed.

Sir Edward Fitzarthur had in the early part of his life, been an actor on the busy stage of politics : he had been employed in several very important embassies, but on a change in the ministry, being disgusted with men and measures, and wearied by party feuds and successful contention, he retired from court with a resolution never to return to any share in business, till those whom he had supported were again in power. As remaining unemployed in a place where he had always appeared as a necessary member of the state, was irksome to him ; he quitted London, and with a pension of 2000l. a year, went to settle at Marstonbury : here he, in a great degree, forgot the scene he had quitted ; he turned his thoughts to the improvement and enlargement of his estate, re-built his house, and married Lady Barbara Besworth, the sister of the Earl of Drumferne.

The regret which, however it may be disguised, there are few who do not feel, on an involuntary secession from state employments, in a few years ceased to give Sir Edward any uneasiness, and his marriage, and the birth of his daughter, effectually
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reconciled him to the part he had chosen : but retirement considered as productive of the pleasures of leisure, tranquillity, contemplation, books, and such gratifications of the mind, was not what he chose, or was fitted to enjoy : he had lived so long in splendor and magnificence, that nothing that did not deserve those appellations, pleased him : he re-built and furnished his house in a stile of superior grandeur ; he arranged his household in a method similar to that he had been accustomed to while acting as the representative of a crowned head : thus, wanting nothing but the *emoluments* of his former posts, he adhered to that way of living which is in itself uneasy and cumbersome, and which is rendered to most minds still more disgusting by a forced familiarity.

This conduct excluded him from pleasures which otherwise he might have enjoyed, and drew on him imputations which he did not deserve. The greater part of the neighbouring gentry were awed by this grandeur ; and the fear that in reciprocal invitations a display of equal magnificence would be expected, determined them rather to forego all acquaintance with Sir Edward and Lady Barbara, than to subject themselves to invidious comparisons. Content therefore to admire the blaze at a distance, these, from whose society gratification might have been derived, were by prudential reasons deterred from all connection, but still they were inclined to wish this barrier thrown down. Others, who judged only from the first appearances, attributed this ostentatious method of living to that which had no

part in it, pride ; not considering that what we have been accustomed to, is in some instances the most agreeable to us, they immediately concluded, that it was assumed for the purpose of keeping them in awe, and to make them appear contemptible ; but those few whom either accident or former acquaintance admitted to intimacy, were soon convinced that all ostentation was external, and that in Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, they who were not ruled by their fears or their prejudices, might find all that a less exceptionable manner of living could have indicated.

These, however, being in proportion to the discriminating part of the world, were few : so few as not to deprive Sir Edward's situation of the epithets of solitary and sequestered ; but this was not to him an evil of such magnitude as others would have thought it : by his exalted situation while in office, he had been much excluded from general society : there were in his neighbourhood none who could be stiled his equals ; and his wishes for companions were never strong enough to induce him to make overtures to such as had nothing more to recommend them than the possession of the family estate, or a large fortune acquired in trade.

A seclusion from the world so nearly total, few but Lady Barbara would have found agreeable ; but to her it was so : she had a mind, which was a never-failing source of amusement and employment ; and the education of her daughter,

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ter, left her neither leisure nor inclination to seek other pleasures: she saw the obstacle which her husband's manner of living was to all acquaintance with those near them; and she saw it with concern, because she well knew the inference which would be drawn from it to his disadvantage; she was therefore particularly cautious to avoid, in her own behaviour, every thing that could be construed into *hauteur*; and though from this the natural goodness of her disposition ever exempted her, yet she, considering the predicament she stood in, thought and found all she could do, too little to ward off the suspicion of pride from herself and Sir Edward, whose conduct, notwithstanding in her heart she disapproved it, she always endeavoured to vindicate on rational principles, but her good intentions had not the effect she wished; it was allowed that Lady Barbara was amiable, and the load of censure was increased on Sir Edward, as all his parade and show was to gratify himself, if she had no pleasure in it.

Lady Barbara's esteem and confidence rested so implicitly on her husband, that, allowing for this foible, which she considered as the alloy inseparable from humanity, he appeared to her a man without fault: and, notwithstanding the inconveniences to which his mode of living subjected her, she persuaded herself it was the best for him, because with less employment than his taste found him, his time might have hung heavy, and he might have

wished for a return to the scenes of business he had quitted. Satisfied that he would not suffer his fortune to be injured while he had leisure to regard it, she saw with pleasure his estate daily improving in beauty, though a wish sometimes rose in her mind that the alterations he made, had been less expensive.

- In this situation, which by some would scarcely be thought to admit of existence, Constance Matilda Fitzarthur was brought up, with a total insensibility to the misfortune of being deprived of those pleasures which are so eagerly pursued by almost all of her age, rank, and expectations: she had never entertained a wish for which Marltonbury was not the scene of action, till about two years before this period, when the tranquillity of her mind had received a shock from a visit Mrs. Stavenell made to Sir Edward and Lady Barbara, in which she extorted a promise that her niece should soon be permitted to spend one winter with her in London.

- Her seclusion from the world, had not rendered Constance unfit to accept this invitation: she had been educated by a mother, very well qualified for the office, and had been instructed in every branch of knowledge proper for her sex: the accomplishments which may be termed the polish of education, she acquired under the best masters, who, at those times when the desertion of London afforded them leisure and opportunity, were invited

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to Marstonbury to instruct her; but the formation of her morals, and the improvement of her rational faculties, Lady Barbara took on herself: she taught her languages, she infused into her a love of literature, and directed her attention to the best books; well knowing how necessary it is to fill up early that vacuum in the mind, which, if neglected, admits promiscuously the torrents ever ready to burst in on a young imagination. In all feminine elegance, Lady Barbara enforced precept by example; and she had the happiness of seeing her endeavours crowned with all the success even maternal anxiety could wish. The pleasure which the discharge of this arduous duty afforded her, was unalloyed by any apprehensions respecting her daughter's fate in the world: the path she was to tread was marked out for her; and all Lady Barbara's endeavours tended, not to the making her a dazzling object of admiration, but to the improvement of her mind; to rendering her an agreeable companion, and to furnish her with such means of amusement, as should take away the necessity of, and even the inclination to the seeking abroad for means to spend time.

Lord Drumferne's eldest son, Lord Reycollm, had very early removed all Sir Edward and Lady Barbara's anxiety about establishing their daughter in the world: he had given proofs of an attachment to his cousin, which were returned on her part, by the unrestrained affection of a sister: she had not

been taught, to disguise her sentiments ; and as his character was such as she could not but esteem, and the kindness he manifested towards her, demanded her gratitude, she was never solicitous to conceal the pleasure she felt at seeing him, nor her sorrow when his visits ended : from these sentiments of reciprocal regard their parents hoped an union of the honours and fortunes of both families would be productive of equal happiness to both. Sir Edward's knowledge of the world, and the near connection subsisting between them, induced lord Drumferne to follow his advice in the education of his son ; but on one point they differed ; Sir Edward insisted on the necessity of his going abroad, lord Drumferne thought the discipline of a public school and the university sufficient ; to which opinion he was biased, not so much by the information of his judgment, as by this desire to save the expence of his son's residence on the continent : his income was far from large, and so much had he heard of the extravagance of young men abroad, that he was very little inclined to trust to his son's prudence : at length, however, fearing that he should, by thwarting Sir Edward, lose the advantage he expected from a match between lord Reycolm and Miss Fitzarthur, he consented ; but it was on condition that his son should travel only as Mr. Besworth. When he was to set out the regret he felt at parting from Constance, left no room to doubt the sincerity of his love for her ; his father
then

then first mentioned it to him ; he confessed it, declared it to Sir Edward, and a promise was interchanged between the cousins, that each should remain unengaged till his return, which was now shortly expected.

CH A P. II.

N O V E L T Y.

THE time when what Constance had learned in theory was to be reduced to practice, was now arrived ; and she prepared to quit her native home with alacrity ; but she was soon convinced that the most supreme felicity of this world is alloyed, for at the moment of taking leave, she would have relinquished all the prospect before her to have been spared the pain attending separation : with many exhortations and blessings from her father and mother she got into the chaise : the distance was forty two miles, and she arrived at the place of her destination about four in the afternoon. The novelty of the scenes through which she passed, and the hope of future pleasure, lessened the regret she felt at leaving Marstonbury, and when the chaise stopped at Mrs. Stavenell's she flattered herself that all appearance of sorrow was removed from her countenance ; the reception she met with from

her aunt tended to raise her spirits, for it was expressive of the sincerest joy at seeing her.

It was just dinner time when she arrived, and Constance sat down with Mrs. Stavenell alone, whose numberless interrogatories took away all fear of wanting conversation, and spared her niece the trouble of starting any subject. She was sufficiently acquainted with Mrs. Stavenell, by her having made two visits of some length at Marstonbury, to know what pleasure her society could afford her, and as she had had very little opportunity of drawing parallels, she could only judge that though she abounded in good nature, and was of a very cheerful disposition, she was far inferior in point of understanding and accomplishments to lady Barbara.

Mrs. Stavenell was Sir Edward's only sister, and had been in her youth a celebrated beauty; she had married early, and had been left a widow with a very large jointure: in a short time after the death of her first husband, she, by marrying Captain Stavenell of the navy, who was many years younger than herself, offended all her relations; and had she not on his decease made overtures of reconciliation, the breach between her and Sir Edward had probably never been healed. She had one son by the last marriage, a lieutenant in the navy, who was at this time in France, and expected to return soon, which inclined Mrs. Stavenell

venell to hasten to London in as short a time as was convenient after her niece's arrival

As when Mrs. Stavenell was young, female education was not the fashion, her mind was left in an uncultivated state : her beauty had proved such an attractive as rendered every other superfluous, and she had never found leisure or inclination for any thing serious : her temper was easy, and while she was suffered to enjoy her own pursuits she allowed those about her the same privilege. She was naturally inclined to think well of all, because her powers of discrimination were confined, but her prejudices for and against were not to be eradicated. On the whole she was what is generally termed a very good sort of woman : she liked gaiety, company, and cards ; and with a degree of frankness peculiar to her, would own, that at the age of sixty she had not lost any part of her relish for pleasure : she was fond of young people and caressed by them : any lady of her acquaintance who wanted a chaperon to a place of public amusement, might depend on Mrs. Stavenell, whom the request gratified and the diversion pleased. To many other good qualities she added that of exerting herself to the utmost in the service of her friends : in solicitation where she was employed her perseverance was unwearied, and she thought nothing she could do too much for those she loved ; but this inclined her sometimes to injustice, as in her endeavours to gratify her favourites, she often injured those who were more

deserving. As good humour was her chief recommendation, much dignity, or that which could make her respectable, was not to be found in her : her presence never awed those whose conversation was too little restrained ; she would join in the laugh that distressed others ; a want of delicacy and sensibility made her a less agreeable companion to persons of elegant minds than she would otherwise, with no greater endowments have been, and her prodigious and uncontrouled flow of spirits, drew on her sometimes the imputation of vulgarity.

This lady was not the person lady Barbara Fitzarthur would have chosen to intrust with the charge of introducing her daughter to the world, but she had been so very importunate that a refusal must have hazarded another rupture, which lady Barbara's spirit of peace made her solicitous to avoid. Mrs. Stavenell was very fond of Constance, her care of her was not therefore to be doubted ; and no real danger could be apprehended from a compliance, as the connection between lord Reycoln and Miss Fitzarthur was known to all their friends. Conversation filled up the evening of Constance's arrival, and she was initiated in theory into the life she was to lead : the next morning was devoted to preparations for their journey, the following day was that on which they were to set out, and she heard with pleasure that they were to be accompanied to town by a gentleman and his two sisters, who were expected to dine that day at Mrs. Stavenell's

Stavenell's, to sleep at her house, and to set off with them in the morning. As soon as her assistance was no longer necessary to Mrs. Stavenell, she went to put herself in order for the reception of these strangers to her; and as dressing on the eve of a journey would have been very inconvenient, her aunt promised to make an excuse for her appearing in her habit, an indecorum to which Constance could not reconcile herself, though told that the ladies would not stand on ceremony.

The company expected were Lord Farnford, Lady Maria, and Lady Emma Peryton his sisters; before Constance could return to Mrs. Stavenell they came, and, with a diffident timidity which dyed her cheeks, she, as soon as she was ready, went into the drawing room, and was introduced to them.

The earl was about twenty-eight years of age: he had lost his father when he was very young; and his mother at her death, which happened but a few years after, left the care of him and his sisters to Mrs. Stavenell's first husband; the whole of this trust, had in a few months, devolved on Mrs. Stavenell, and she executed it with a degree of fidelity that did her honour. The plan of Lord Farnford's education had been settled by his father, in order to relieve his widow of the laborious task of marking out the path he should pursue: he was brought up under private tutors till he was of a

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proper age to go to the university, and from the university he set out on a tour to the continent, from whence he returned at the time that the management of his estate, which had accumulated during his minority to the annual income of 25,000*l.* was remitted by his guardians to himself.

As Lord Farnford was an only son, he had been humoured while his parents lived, and when he came under the care of Mrs. Stavenell he was regarded as an orphan, whose immediate gratification ought, from motives of compassion to him, and friendship for his parents, to be studied. His temper was naturally good, but his passions violent, and as they never met with, they could not bear controul: he imagined that his title and fortune would always secure to him that submission from others which excessive indulgence had made necessary to his happiness, and he had seldom found himself mistaken: in intellectual endowments nature had been very liberal to him, but as in his studies he had no competitor till his habits were fixed, emulation was suffered to expire without producing any of its good consequences, and his indisposition to submit to authority, strengthened by a love of pleasure, made him contented to fall short of excellence: when stimulated, he would sometimes display talents which he was not known to possess, but these exertions were transient; and satisfied with convincing the world that he had abilities if he

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he chose to employ them, he directed his attention solely to procuring for himself those pleasures which the flattery and adulation he had ever been accustomed to made him regard as his peculiar property. Thus a warmth of temper, which, if properly governed and directed, might have produced the noblest effects and rendered its possessor an ornament to his rank and country, was made criminal by misapplication and indulgence, and an understanding, which might have benefited mankind in general, was degraded to the low purposes of cunning and circumvention.

His person was more than commonly good, his address and manners insinuating, and uniformly proportioned, either to the opinion he wished others to entertain of him, or their abilities to serve him. In a mixed assembly he was polite, easy, and attentive to etiquette; every lady heard him with pleasure, and every gentleman considered him as the standard of elegance in dress and deportment: in a small party or a tête à tête he was whatever those he conversed with wished him, he had sufficient literature to preserve him from contempt among the learned; he could make himself acceptable to men of genius; with the dissipated he was always well received; the first to propose, the most eager to pursue, and the last to quit pleasure; but with these he always maintained a superiority which entitled him to their respect, and which in all competitions inclined them to yield

yield to him. He was never without some scheme in agitation, and he seldom failed of carrying the point he aimed at, though he occasionally paid more for his gratifications than by others they were thought worth ; but nothing was too great a price to save him from disappointment : a natural share of pride kept his estate unincumbered, as he feared a decrease of his fortune might lessen his importance in the world, and, as his income was enough to satisfy even *his* wishes, that he did not exceed it, could scarcely be called forbearance.

Lady Maria was two years older than her brother : those who were intimate with her knew her to have a very fine understanding and a very amiable mind : but there was nothing about her to attract attention.

Lady Emma, who was twenty-six years of age, was in her appearance captivating ; a brilliant complexion, dark eyes, and speaking features were rendered still more pleasing by a natural complacent smile : her figure was light and elegant ; she exercised the privilege of beauty, and indulged a singular, though, to her, perfectly becoming taste in what she wore ; she possessed a wonderful share of vivacity, and had so amiable an appearance, that Constance, whose acquaintance with variety of person was very small, thought her the most beautiful creature she had ever seen.

C H A P. III.

S T A R I N G.

IT was evident that the company had been previously informed whom they were to see: Constance was received by them with much civility, and the awkwardnesses of a first interview were soon overcome: she was much pleased with the sprightliness of the conversation between Lord Farnford, Lady Emma, and Mrs. Stavenell; but was concerned to see that Lady Maria, who had taken out her netting, bore a very small share in it, because from that little she did say it seemed in her power to entertain.

A summons to dinner soon made them all rise, and when they were going out of the room, Mrs. Stavenell saying she would follow, lady Maria went first, and Constance retreated to let lady Emma pass; but she, taking her hand and desiring there might be no ceremony between them, led her out of the room, and by the easy politeness of her behaviour confirmed the good opinion which the first sight of her had induced. Mrs. Stavenell and Lord Farnford followed them immediately, and Constance heard her aunt say in a whisper, Well what do you think of her? To which lord Farnford answered with an oath—She is the loveliest woman

woman I ever beheld. When does lord Reycolme come over? The first question disconcerted Constance, but the answer shocked her: unaccustomed as she was to hear any but the simplest language, such an asseveration as Lord Farnford used made her involuntarily start: Lady Emma perceived it, but did not guess the cause; the loud laugh which Lord Farnford's question excited in Mrs. Stavenell attracted her notice, and an inquiry what was the matter gave Constance time to recover.

The subjects of the conversation at dinner were such as she was wholly unacquainted with: Lord Farnford, whose eyes were so fixed on her that she hardly dared to raise her head, perceiving that she was excluded from it, said—It is not fair that we should talk of persons and things of which Miss Fitzarthur cannot be supposed to have any knowledge of yet: pray Mrs. Stavenell, do not let us punish ourselves by keeping her silent.—I hope, said Mrs. Stavenell, she will soon be able to talk with us, and that you will all be very well acquainted: I must have you all Friends. Lord Farnford now turned the discourse to those topics on which he supposed Constance to be informed: as he lived within thirty miles of Marstonbury, some few persons were known to both; and music, new books, &c. furnished matter for general conversation, and convinced those present that rusticity of manners, or ignorance of polite accomplishments
does

does not necessarily follow from an education a hundred and thirty miles from the metropolis.

Some time after the cloth was removed, Lord Farnford, with a smile that indicated some pleasing thought, rose, and coming behind Mrs. Stavenell's chair, whispered her : to what he said she answered—I will as soon as I have an opportunity—and he returned to his seat. What mischief are you meditating now ? said Lady Emma to him.—None replied Lord Farnford ; why should you suspect me ?—Because you look mischievous, said she, I am sure you have something in your head. After a silence of a few minutes, Mrs. Stavenell, looking at Lord Farnford, said, pray Lady Emma, when did you see Lord Calorne ? Vexation spread itself over Lady Emma's countenance ; and the laugh which her brother could not suppress proved that he had prompted Mrs. Stavenell to ask this question, which, for what reason, Constance could not discover, had disturbed lady Emma : instead of answering Mrs. Stavenell, she said to him—Now sir, I know what your scheme was, I thought there was some mischief ; but, checking herself as if fearful of saying too much, she stopped, and Lord Farnford said—But why do you not answer Mrs. Stavenell's question ? come poor thing I will speak for her. Lady Emma attempted to stop him, and Lady Maria joined her in desiring he would desist ; but he would not listen to them, and said—Why you must know, madam, that

that Calorne and Emma have had a most shocking quarrel : and she has revenged it on herself by refusing an invitation to dance where she thought she should meet him. This excited Mrs. Stavenell's wonder and curiosity ; she desired to know the cause of offence, and Lord Farnford, with a degree of formality calculated to render it still more ridiculous, informed her that Lord Calorne, hearing somebody congratulate Lady Emma on the recovery of her looks immediately after a severe illness, had said to a third person that he was very sorry to see her look so well ; that on being asked his reason, he had replied, that he always thought it a bad sign when the countenance was not affected by sickness, and that in her case it was particularly alarming, as it had convinced him of that which he had believed impossible, that for the appearance of redundant health she was indebted to the industry and ingenuity of her own hands.

This anecdote Lady Emma endeavoured to contradict but her inability to do it and the disorder apparent in her countenance witnessed it a fact too forcibly, and an allowance from Lord Farnford, that though this was substantially the truth, he might not be quite correct, was all she could obtain from him : the laugh was now against Lady Emma, whom this story had much lowered in the opinion of Constance : she had heard of the practice of painting, but imagined it was not adopted by respectable people. That Lord Calorne, with whom

whom she had been acquainted some years before, should express his censure so pointedly, argued that it was disapproved by men of sense: why then was it done? She pitied Lady Emma's distress, and secretly blamed her brother for exposing her, but her contempt rose at the deceit.

A quadrille table was formed to dispose of part of the evening, and total ignorance of the game obtained for Constance the privilege of being a spectator; she sat by Mrs. Stavenell, and being warned that she must learn to play, endeavoured by attention to acquire some insight into the business they were engaged in: Lord Farnford sat on the opposite side of the table, and was frequently blamed for very bad play: at last Mrs. Stavenell hitting the table such a blow as made Constance start, said in a tone of anger—Upon my life, my lord, if you do so I'll order a screen to be set here, and then you will mind your cards, you have lost the vole, and I had it sure. This reproach was unintelligible to Constance; Lord Farnford understood it, and promised amendment. Presently after, making some other egregious blunder, Mrs. Stavenell said to Constance—My dear, go to the other side, and set your chair a little behind my lords, and look over his hand; for he minds nothing while you sit here. Excessively disconcerted at finding that it was she who had drawn Lord Farnford's attention from his cards, she was rising to obey Mrs. Stavenell, when he again
promising

promising that he would not offend, and begging her pardon for his rudeness, her aunt bid her keep her seat. But her situation was now become very uncomfortable: the consciousness that she was a particular object of Lord Farnford's attention embarrassed her: Lady Maria, however, very kindly endeavoured, by interesting her in her success, to relieve her, and as his lordship kept his promise, she had nothing more to complain of than weariness.

Supper was ordered at an early hour, and the family retired to rest sooner than ordinary, to fortify themselves against the fatigue of the journey: the three young ladies went up stairs together, followed by a French woman who waited on Lady Maria and Lady Emma, and a maid servant of Mrs. Stavenell's who was to attend Miss Fitzarthur. They took leave of each other, and went into two adjoining rooms.

So little art was employed in Constance's dress, that she, in a few minutes, dismissed her attendant: Lady Maria and her sister were yet up, and the conversation was so loud that she could not avoid overhearing it: she heard Lady Emma ask the French-woman what she thought of Miss Fitzarthur, and her answer in broken English—The young lady be very handsome, sure, but,—But what, said Lady Emma, in a tone that bespoke impatience. I would say, replied the woman, as *mademoiselle* be not so beautiful as your ladyship.

ship.—No, said Lady Emma; well to be sure you are the best judge, but she is certainly very pretty:—And do you think, said Lady Maria, that Emma is handsomer than Miss Fitzarthur?—Oh yes, replied Lady Emma's panegyrist, Lady Emma be very beautiful.—But said Lady Maria, do you mean Lady Emma in the morning, or Lady Emma when she is finished for the evening.—Oh, Lady Emma at all times, answered the obsequious Françoise, her ladyship have so much viv in her eyes, such a smile—Mercy on me, said Lady Maria, how can you, Emma, suffer any body to flatter you so grossely, and look pleasant at it!—I suppose, answered Lady Emma, that Minotte only says what she thinks, and I wanted to know her opinion. But, said Lady Maria, I should immediately have discovered that her opinion was not worth having when she could make such a sacrifice. What sacrifice? returned Lady Emma. I shall vex you, said her sister, if I say any more.—You will not indeed, answered Lady Emma, you cannot put me out of humour. Why is it not a sacrifice of truth, my dear Emma, said Lady Maria, to say that Miss Fitzarthur, to whom nature has been so uncommonly lavish of her favours, is inferior to you in beauty?—Could any impartial person say so? Or can you yourself believe it? You see Miss Fitzarthur as she really is, and without the common aids of dress, and you and I think very differently if you imagine you ever saw a prettier woman; but, allowing Minotte to

to err in *judgment*, how can you let her *say* such things?—I protest were I you, (for as I am, you will say, I am in no danger of being flattered) I would not suffer her to open her lips to me in praise of any thing farther than the dressing of my head, or the fashion of my gown. Constance heard the French-woman, with an affected laugh, reply, Lady Maria be always so grave. Lady Emma said little more till she and her sister were left by themselves: then she began to complain of Lady Maria's unkindness, saying, that if Minotte was not very well bred, Lady Maria's speeches was sufficient to encourage her to be very saucy.—Surely not, said Lady Maria, I think if they have any effect they must tend rather to repress her forwardness; but then why will you subject yourself to such mortifications?—I see, answered Lady Emma, that you are determined no body shall like me—and my brother to night!—how could he be so cruel as to expose me in the manner he did? It was done only to mortify me. I am sorry for it, indeed, said lady Maria mildly, and in my own heart I blamed him very much, but even this is your own fault: but this is a subject long ago worn thread-bare, do not let us lose the time when we should sleep in such repetition, I dare say we shall be sufficiently tired with to-morrow's journey, so I wish you a good night. Lady Emma's inclination to complain of the ill treatment she received was too strong to be easily-repressed, and her sister was obliged

obliged to silence her by persevering in her resolution to say no more.

This conversation had elevated Constance's opinion of lady Maria, in proportion as it depressed that she had imbibed of lady Emma: she had been caught by the external appearance of the latter, and no very favourable ideas had been excited by that of the former: pleased with having her opinion of the one improved, and vexed at being deceived in the judgment she had formed of the other, she wished for a further opportunity of developing the characters of the sisters, and betook herself to rest, of which she imagined she should stand in great need during so long a journey as one of ninety-five miles appeared to her.

C H A P. IV.

LOQUACITY.

BEFORE Constance was quite ready to make her appearance the next morning, lady Emma came to her door, and having obtained admittance, she again won on her by the same affability and sweetness of behaviour, which had so prejudiced her in her favour the day before; she found her ladyship's visit was the consequence of apprehension that she had heard what had passed after they had

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parted at night, and that her speaking so incautiously arose from ignorance of Miss Fitzarthur's occupying the adjoining room: as lady Emma could not, without asking directly whether she had been overheard, get at the information she wanted, Constance could easily avoid confessing by answering her expressions of concern, lest she and her sister had disturbed her, by assurances that they had not: lady Emma seemed satisfied, and they went down together to the breakfast table, where they found Mrs. Stavenell, Lord Farnford, and lady Maria.

After the ceremonies and inquiries incidental to a first meeting in the morning, the plan of their journey was discussed: it had been settled that Lord Farnford's coach should take Mrs. Stavenell, Lady Maria Peryton, and Miss Fitzarthur; Lord Farnford was to drive lady Emma in the phaeton, and Mrs Stavenell's coach was to be filled with such servants as it was necessary should travel with them: as they went with their own horses, and the days were almost at the shortest, it was agreed that they should sleep two nights on the road; the first days journey was to be the longest, and they hoped to reach Mrs Stavenell's house in Spring-garden in the forenoon of the third day: this scheme had been settled before, but Lord Farnford now, going to the window, said to lady Emma—I am almost afraid to venture in the phaeton, for though it looks so fine now, I think the weather will

will change; we may possibly have snow.—How can you think so replied lady Emma, it freezes very hard, and the air is clear; there is no appearance of change of weather.—Well, said her brother, I do not care to venture—It is not so hot as to make riding five in the coach uncomfortable; one of the men shall drive the chaise.—Mrs Stavenell, will you let us in?—Not I indeed, answered Mrs. Stavenell, you are not afraid of weather.—I am sure you have drove in rain and snow more than we shall have to day—if Lady Emma is afraid she shall go with us—but I vow you shall not—no, no, my lord, I am too cunning for you, don't think to catch old birds with chaff—I know what makes you want to go with us. I protest, said Lord Farnford, I think it will snow, and it is excessively cold—Emma, how do you think you can bear it?—Oh very well, replied her ladyship, with a malicious smile, I am not at all afraid—I beg we may go in the phaeton.—Then do be so obliging, said he, as to give me some of your enamel for my face; for really I am afraid it will be quite flayed before we get to town.—By this sarcastic request Lord Farnford revenged himself on his sister for preferring the phaeton, by chusing which she had intended to mortify him, well knowing that Miss Fitzarthur was the attractive that made him incline to going in the coach.

Matters were again settled in their former train; and the travellers set out in the order proposed.

All was new to Constance, and, the weather favouring them, notwithstanding the time of the year was not such as to display the beauties of the country, all was delightful to her : Mrs. Stavenell was busy in pointing out to her the various objects, and, seeming to derive much pleasure from that which the journey afforded her niece, told her the names of the several persons to whom the principal estates and houses belonged ; stated their pedigrees, alliances, and incomes with accuracy ; and related the particulars of their histories : at first Constance was amused with this ; but it soon grew tiresome, and she could not forbear wishing that the conversation had been of such a kind as Lady Maria would have joined in, who for the first three hours had said little more than to set Mrs. Stavenell's errors right, or to give her such information as she required to fill up the chasms which any failure of memory occasioned in her biography : but Constance who wished to relieve Lady Maria from a silence which Mrs. Stavenell's volubility had in effect imposed on her, addressing herself to her, began to talk to her, and the conversation was just growing agreeable, when it was interrupted by Mrs. Stavenell, who laying violently hold of her niece's arm, and directing her eyes to the left side of the road—Do you see, said she, an old white house there, with a great many chimneys ?—Yes madam, I do, it is to the right of the church—Yes, so it is : well that house belongs to a baro-knight, that was, you see, an humble

humble servant of mine when I was young; and many a merry day have I spent there; but I must tell you something excessive comical about him:—it was the drollest thing to be sure!—He hardly ever used to come to London; but howsoever it happened that he comes up to town the winter as I was married to my first husband—poor dear soul!—so I, with a whole parcel of young ones like myself, was at Ranelagh, and who should come in but this gentleman—I put myself o'purpose in the way, and up he comes, bowing, and simpering, and hoping as I was well, and so forth; and so after a few compliments—I should tell you I left my company and walked, you see, along with him; he began a talking in the old style about my cruelty, and when I would make him happy, and so on.—I was ready to burst with laughing, I thought I should have died, for I found he didn't know a syllable about my being married—So I lets him run on, and we walked on, and talked about people we knowed; at last I couldn't hold out a bit longer, and I says, when he axed me about some lady, that I hadn't seen for a great while, that I had never laid my eyes on her since I was married—poor Sir Thomas! how he did stare! just for a'll the world as if he had been stuck:—I burst out a laughing in his face: poor soul! he had not a word to throw at a dog—and so we walks up to our company again.

Mrs. Stavenell was so much diverted at the repetition of this story, that she did not perceive its want of effect on her auditory : it excited only a smile on the countenance of her niece, and Lady Maria remained unmoved by it : her fit of laughter just subsided in time for her to point out to Constance's observation another house, about which she had something *very comical* to tell her : Lady Maria inclined forward to look at the house, and while Mrs. Stavenell put her head out at the coach window, to be sure she was not mistaken, said in a whisper—Now for the story of the running away : I know the appendage to every house on the road.—Constance was obliged to stifle a laugh ; for Mrs. Stavenell, having settled the geography of the place, and the bearings of the several objects, had again seated herself. And now began a circumstantial narrative of the elopement of a young lady with whom she had formerly been intimate.

Happy was it for Mrs. Stavenell's hearers when the story concluded.

Constance was so heartily wearied that she determined to give no more encouragement to her aunt's loquacity by asking questions ; but, addressing herself again to Lady Maria, she began to talk on such subjects as she thought Mrs. Stavenell would not engross : professing her ignorance of the life into which she was to be initiated, she endeavoured to gain some information respecting its various employments,

ployments, and amusements: she found Lady Maria both able and inclined to answer her questions; but Mrs. Stavenell's interpositions were so frequent, that, had not her perseverance been encouraged by the evidences of Constance's weariness in listening to uninteresting relations, the conversation would again have been warped to its former course.

Lord Farnford and Lady Emma had got into the inn where they were to dine, a little before the coach arrived: he was ready to receive the ladies, and having handed Mrs. Stavenell and his sister out of the carriage, he took Constance's hand, and not quitting it till they reached the room where they were to dine, he, with a degree of earnestness, and a particularity of behaviour which distressed her, expressed his fears that the journey must already have very much fatigued her: just at the door of the room Mrs. Stavenell turned round, and seeing Lord Farnford holding her niece's hand while her eyes were riveted to the ground, and her face covered with crimson, she exclaimed:—*Heaven's day!* what's here? well, my lord, if I had guessed as much, I would have sent my niece first: then retreating, and bidding Constance pass her, she called Lord Farnford to her, and went out with him. In a few minutes she returned, and it was evident she had been talking more seriously than was usual with her.

It wanted near an hour of dinner-time, and as the weather was, though cold, fine, Lord Farnford proposed to the ladies a walk about the town: this no one objected to, and they set out. Constance determined to keep close to Mrs. Stavenell, but Lord Farnford joining her, she told her niece to walk with the two ladies who were a little before them: after a few minutes conversation between Mrs. Stavenell and Lord Farnford, he quitted her, and took Lady Maria from her party; Lady Emma and Constance then remained together: the journey was the subject of their conversation; Lady Emma spoke of the pleasantness of the phaeton, and tried to prevail on Constance to ride with them; but to this she had more objections than she thought fit to urge; she declined it, but her ladyship still pressed it, saying, she was sure the conversation in the coach could not be so charming as to make her unwilling to quit it, and she concluded with very earnestly begging that she would only try how pleasant it was for the next ten miles: she had just said so, when Mrs. Stavenell coming up asked what Lady Emma was begging for: Constance was going to speak, when Lady Emma in a low voice said hastily—Don't tell her—say it was something else. Unwilling to disoblige her, and still less inclined to assign a cause which was not the true one, Constance remained silent; but Mrs. Stavenell, who had overheard them, said—I know what you was talking about—you want to persuade

suade Miss Fitzarthur to go kicked up in the air with you ; but upon my life she shan't—if my lord has a mind to break his neck and your's into the bargain well and good ; but my niece shall go in the coach, and no where else. Lady Emma looked disappointed, and quitting them joined her brother: Constance, very glad to be released from her importunity, and fearful of a renewal of it, walked during the remainder of their ramble either with her aunt or Lady Maria.

They returned to the inn just at dinner-time : and as soon as they rose from table, the carriages were brought to the door : when Lord Farnford handed Constance to the coach he said—cannot I prevail on you, madam, to trust to my driving ? you might depend on my care—I wish you would change places with Lady Emma. Constance only replied that she could not, and got into the carriage.

Nothing material occurred during the remainder of their journey, , which was conducted according to their plan ; and before two o'clock on the third day they reached London, to the no small joy of Constance and Lady Maria, who were equally tired.

CHAP. V.

SINCERITY.

THE travellers dined together at Mrs. Stavenell's, and early in the evening, Lord Farnford and his sisters going to his house in Portman-square, she and her niece were left together.—How do you like my lord, and the two young ladies? was the first question Mrs. Stavenell put to Constance after they were gone: she replied, they were all very agreeable.—Lord Farnford and Lady Emma, said Mrs. Stavenell, are both of them very agreeable, but Lady Maria is so queer—come, tell me honestly what you think; I hate mincing: don't you think Lady Maria very odd?—I know so little of either of them, answered Constance, that I ought not to judge; but I think Lady Maria, though she is rather reserved, has something very pleasing in her when she speaks.—Aye, *when* she speaks, said Mrs. Stavenell, but her words I suppose she thinks too precious to be thrown away, she'll always be so while she is so fond of reading—books, books, that's all her delight; or else to sit a whole rainy day with somebody as she likes; she's a monstrous deal too grave, she hates cards, and I believe, by her own good will, would hardly ever stir out; she's an odd

odd woman, that's for certain ; but poor thing she has sad health.

The portrait Mrs. Stavenell had drawn of Lady Maria was not such as excited disgust in Constance ; on the contrary her opinion of her improved by every opportunity she had of being acquainted with her, and she was convinced that the reserve with which she behaved was not attributable to any thing that rendered her unamiable : the peculiarities pointed out to her, as objects of censure, tended rather to strengthen her inclination to become more closely attached to her..

And pray, said Mrs. Stavenell, for you han't told me, what do you think of my lord ?—I have seen so little of him, answered Constance, that I scarcely know what opinion to form ; beside, I am so incompetent a judge of what is right or wrong *here*, that I ought to see a little farther before I presume either to applaud or condemn.—Oh that don't signify, said Mrs. Stavenell, you can tell I warrant you whether you like him or no ; don't you think he's very handsome ?—Certainly he is, replied Constance.—And don't you think him excessive polite ? returned Mrs. Stavenell.—How can I judge of that, said her niece, I know not what is politeness *here*, and that which I should call so, would perhaps be thought the contrary, while what appears to me to be against the rules of good breeding, may be reckoned the excess of it.—Then I am positive, an-

swered Mrs. Stavenell, there's something in my lord that you do not like ; he has done something to displease you.—I should not, I own, replied Constance, if I had been left to form my own opinion, have thought him very well bred.—I am amazed and astonished to hear you say so, interrupted her aunt, why every body thinks him the pink of politeness ; why child, all the world imitates him.—Then I acknowledge my judgment erroneous, replied Constance, and my ignorance must excuse me.—But what is there, said Mrs. Stavenell, that you dislike in him ?—To tell you ingenuously my opinion, which is not worth attending to or asking, replied Constance, though perhaps you will laugh at my folly, I should not have imagined that a well-bred man could have taken pleasure in staring a simple country girl out of countenance : I never saw any body stare so : I did not know which way to turn my head, and really he was so civil that he was quite troublesome.—Aye, returned Mrs. Stavenell, indeed there he was a little out ; I was monstrous angry with him, and scolded him handsomely ; but it was want of thought, he did not mean to be rude ; but you shan't put me out of conceit with my lord, he is a sweet young man, though a little wild : but so are all young men, and I like it the better ; he is a monstrous favourite of mine, and so's his sister, Lady Emma ; what do you think of her ?—I never saw any one, said Constance, whose appearance

pearance prejudiced me so strongly in their favour? —No, I durst to say you did not, replied Mrs. Stavenell, she is a pretty creature, and so lively! she's always in tip-top spirits—God bless her, I believe she never thinks of any thing—sure never was two sisters more different!—I'd venture any money Maria dies an old maid, only because she's queer; for she will not marry any man that would have her for her fortune, nor he mustn't be a gay man, nor this and that and to'ther; so that I don't believe for my part, there's a man in the world good enough for her; and I'm so provok'd to see her so indifferent: she finds faults with every offer, and then says she thinks it much best to live single—and then we have such a lecture about dissipation and bad husbands.—I see its all meant for her sister; she léads her a sad life, preaching to her from morning to night, and there's nothing Emma can do that's right.

From this conversation Constance learnt that, out of the three subjects of it, there was but one whose acquaintance was worth cultivating seriously: Lady Emma's great good nature and vivacity might captivate, but it was from something more solid that Constance hoped to derive pleasure: she determined to attach herself as closely to Lady Maria as she would permit her, and hoped to gather from her those rules of conduct, which she began to fear Mrs. Stavenell could not give her.

C H A P.

C H A P. VI.

D I F F I C U L T Y.

THE hurry of a change of residence was over in two or three days, and Miss Fitzarthur found herself agreeably settled : Mrs. Stavenell treated her with the utmost kindness, and introduced her to the many who visited at her house : Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton were so attentive to her that a day seldom passed without her seeing them, and her time was so engrossed with company, visits, breakfast-parties, airings on horseback, walks and public places, that she had not leisure to attend to any thing that had, while she was at Marstonbury, been the object of her pursuit : she had brought some books to town with her, but they yet remained packed up ; and she saw herself embarked in a vortex from which she could not extricate herself : at first the novelty and the gaiety of the several amusements she partook of pleased her ; but she soon found that she had exchanged substantial gratification for that which had nothing intrinsically valuable to boast : irregularities to which she had never been accustomed, late hours, fatigue, and sudden transitions from heat to cold, in a fortnight affected her health and countenance : she lost her colour, her strength, and spirits ; and finding it impossible to continue the dissipated life she now led, she determined

mined by some means or other to detach herself from it, but she knew her aunt well enough to be convinced that this would be very difficult.

Another circumstance strengthened this wish and rendered still more desirable some alteration in her way of spending her time. The very close connection subsisting between her aunt and Lord Farnford's family, made their visits to each other very frequent: Mrs. Stavenell dined in Portman-square generally twice a week; and Lord Farnford and his sisters were, either one or more, at Mrs. Stavenell's every day: beside this, which was but a natural consequence of their intimacy, Mrs. Stavenell and her niece scarcely ever were at any public place where they did not meet Lord Farnford, whose behaviour to the latter, though it was studiously polite, was such as she saw attracted the notice of whatever company they were with: to be so pointed out was very disagreeable to her, but nothing she could say could prevail on him to relax his excessive attention; she in as plain terms as she dared to use, told Mrs. Stavenell how much he distressed her; but, as might be expected, she only laughed at her, and told her it was not perhaps *country* manners, but any lady in town would think herself honoured by Lord Farnford's civility.

To all sentiments of delicacy, which she constantly dignified with the appellations of *squeamishness* and *affectation*, Mrs. Stavenell was an utter stranger: she was gratified by seeing her niece the object of attention, and her partiality for Lord Farnford inclined

clined her rather to think she erred than that there was reasonable ground for complaint : fearing, that if she was more explicit, Mrs. Stavenell, whose prudence did not abound, would make what she had said the topic of conversation in the next company, she dropt the subject and found she could do nothing more than by a studious coolness repel all lord Farnford's overtures to intimacy.

But nothing she did, had any more effect than what she said ; if she danced, Lord Farnford was the first to address her ; if she walked, or rode on horseback he was of the party ; she never was at the opera without seeing him, and at the moment in which she entered the house, he quitted his company, and remained during the whole of the performance by her. In short, so certain was she of meeting him wherever she went, that no doubt could be entertained that he was told by some one or other of every engagement she had ; and from the little disposition her aunt manifested to rid her of the evil, she began to suspect it was from her he had his intelligence.

What purpose this conduct of Lord Farnford's was to answer she knew not :—she could not imagine, nor did it appear, that he meant to make her uneasy ; he was acquainted with her engagement to Lord Reycoln ; he often spoke of it ; and Lord Reycoln's return, which was now expected, was frequently mentioned in his hearing, and by him : not conceiving it possible that Lord Farnford could entertain

tertain a passion for her which he knew must be hopeless, and not having yet discovered that his reason was at all times subservient to his inclinations, she was wholly at a loss to account for that which occasioned her so much vexation: having nobody to direct her, and being very unwilling to let her friends at Marstonbury know she was less happy than they wished her, she was obliged to trust to her own judgment, and that determined her to give up public amusements and private invitations, rather than to be a witness of the notice which Lord Farnford's intimacy with, and continual attendance on her attracted: she had observed the looks of some of Mrs. Stavenell's acquaintance, the whisper,—the titter behind the fan,—had heard half sentences, and confirmations of suspicions with,—*You would not believe me, but I told you it was so ;—and—I knew how it would be when I heard she was coming, &c. &c.*—hints which served to convince her that all the world did not think so lightly of Lord Farnford's particularity to her, as her aunt did.

The propriety and necessity of avoiding in her conduct whatever could, if reported to Lord Reycoln, lead him to suspect she was held only by her promise, was a doctrine Lady Barbara Fitzarthur had often inculcated on her daughter: Constance was well aware of it, and therefore wished her situation to be generally understood, in order to repress all unreasonable hopes: in every other instance she had succeeded; she was asked for news of Lord Reycoln.

Reycoln by his acquaintance, and by all gentlemen, excepting Lord Farnford, was treated as if Lord Reycoln was present : but nothing would repress Lord Farnford : he saw he embarrassed her, he saw she disliked his assiduity, but he remained unchanged.

To submit to the judgments which those who were ignorant of the circumstances under which she acted, and who in the conclusions they drew did not always chuse the most favourable, was in her estimation an equal injury to herself and Lord Reycoln : it might excite suspicions in him, if he should at any time hereafter be told that a more than ordinary degree of intimacy had been observed between Lord Farnford and her ; and as her affection had never, even in thought, strayed from him, as she looked for his approbation of her conduct, and considered herself as already his wife, to suffer improper constructions to be put on her behaviour was an insult to him, which she could not suffer : she therefore resolved to serve herself of the excuse of her health ; but in what way to prevail on Mrs. Staverevell she could not tell ; she at last thought of informing Lady Maria of her wish, without assigning the chief cause, and to beg her advice.

An opportunity of speaking to her alone offered the next day : Lady Maria called on her to take a walk in the park, and having drawn her ladyship into one of the less-frequented walks, she told her that she was encouraged by the kindness she had shewn

shewn her, to ask her advice in a matter of some importance to her.—Constance then stated to her how disagreeable the manner in which she lived was to her inclination, and how prejudicial to her health, and begged her to tell her how she could prevail on Mrs. Stavenell to suffer her to lead a more regular life, and how she should best decline the invitations given her.

With a smile expressive of pleasure at what she had heard, and approbation of Constance's wish, Lady Maria answered—You cannot tell, Miss Fitz-arthur, half the satisfaction it gives me to find you are not captivated by such a life as Mrs. Stavenell leads herself, and means you should lead: the disposition which the first sight of you excited in me to become attached to you I have repressed, till I saw what your inclinations were:—had you been pleased with dissipation I should have consigned you to my sister; but, finding you one of the few who are disposed and able to think, I must retain you for myself. and you may depend on any thing I can do to remedy the evil you complain of. I would tell Mrs. Stavenell that a less quantity of what is called pleasure would be more agreeable to you, but you must by this time have found out that I am no favourite with her; and I am sure a construction which did not belong to it, would be put on whatever I could say. Mrs. Stavenell is a very good woman in her way—the obligations we have to her are such as we can never discharge, and
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I shall always gratefully acknowledge ; but Mrs. Stavenell is one of the last women I would wish to live with : her love of cards and company is so great, that she thinks all who love any thing better either fools or hypocrites ; and I am certain, were I to speak to her on this subject, she would conclude that I wished, by detaching you from her parties, to secure a larger share of your company : it therefore rests with yourself, and I can do nothing that I think will essentially serve you, but advise you, if you really find the manner of life you are now in disagreeable, to decline accompanying her so often as she expects you ; and to give as a reason for it that late hours and irregularity will not agree with your constitution : this may not perhaps satisfy her at first ; but if you remain firm, her importunity will cease, though perhaps it may cost you, as it has me, a large portion of her favour.—Constance replied that she should be very sorry to offend Mrs. Stavenell, but that it was absolutely impossible for her to continue so irregular a life.—Then, said Lady Maria, you must resolve to stand the laugh ; if ridicule could have deterred me from pursuing my own plan of living, I had been immersed in pleasure, as my sister is ; but I was determined, and the united efforts of almost all my acquaintance failed, who, notwithstanding my natural ill state of health, would have forced me to that which must in a short time have laid me up. There will be one objection I foresee made to your scheme, and

and that is your remaining at home alone : now, to obviate this, let me know when you do not accompany Mrs. Stavenell, and either come to me, or send to me to fit with you ; - I am not half so much engaged as Lady Emma, therefore the chances will be much in favour of my being able to come to you, or to receive you ; and I assure you I shall reckon those very pleasant hours which I shall thus have an opportunity of spending with you.

Constance was extremely sensible of Lady Maria's kindness, and determined to follow her advice: their mutual regard was so much increased by this interview, that it was with reluctance they parted, Lady Maria apparently much pleased with her new friend, and Constance so delighted with her company and conversation, that she would willingly have foregone all other amusements for the sake of an uninterrupted intercourse with her.

Mrs. Stavenell was out when her niece reached home, and she seized this opportunity to write to Marstonbury, she was just sitting down for the purpose when Lord Reycolm's friend, Lord Calorne, whom she had not seen during a space of five years, was announced.

From her well known connexion and intended marriage with Lord Reycolm, she derived the advantage of being at liberty to speak her sentiments freely, to approve without the danger of being thought attached, and to confess the pleasure she derived from seeing some of her acquaintance,

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towards whom her behaviour, but for this circumstance, must have been cautious : this privilege she now exercised, and rejoiced in ; her pleasure at seeing Lord Calorne, with whom in a vacation spent with Lord Reycolme at her father's, she had passed many agreeable hours, was great, and she had no reason to conceal it : his appearance no less, he was just come to town, had heard from Lord Farnford's family that she was with Mrs. Stavenell, and having a slight acquaintance with her, he thought it, he said, incumbent on him to make her niece a visit.

The time elapsed since they last met had improved in Constance a very pretty girl into a lovely woman, and it had been equally beneficial to Lord Calorne : the respect which Constance had before entertained for him was increased by the maturity of his understanding ; his regard for her was confirmed by seeing the progress which all the promising indications he had observed in her had made : they met with the unrestrained affection of a brother and sister, and near an hour slipped away in the pleasing recollection of past occurrences. Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Stavenell, soon after which Lord Calorne, having obtained leave to become a visitor at her house, retired.

As soon as he was gone—Well, my dear, said Mrs. Stavenell, what does Lord Calorne say ? you ha'n't seen him a great while ; has he heard from your gentleman ?—Lord Reycolme, replied Constance

stance, has not written to him since I heard.—Well, and how do you like Lord Calorne? said Mrs. Stavenell, he is very much altered since you saw him, isn't he?—Not much altered, Constance answered: but he is considerably improved.—What returned Mrs. Stavenell, he's one of your favourites I suppose—a great many people likes him, and Lady Emma Peryton among the rest; but I don't like him half so well as Lord Farnford—he's the young man for my money.—My father has a very great regard for Lord Calorne, said Constance; he used to say, when he was at Marstonbury with us, that he was sure he would be an ornament to his country; for that he had more understanding, learning, and application, and was better acquainted with the interests of his country, than any young man he had met with, or than could have been expected from him, as he was educated for the army.—Indeed I believe it may be true, resumed Mrs. Stavenell; but for all that I like Lord Farnford best.—I could make a special match between Lord Calorne and Lady Maria, but I wish he would please to like Lady Emma, for she's monstrous fond of him, and I'm sure 'twould be a very good match for him: she has fifteen thousand pound, and his father is not over and above rich.—A match between Lord Calorne and Lady Maria was no absurd idea, and had not she been five years older than his lordship it had been desirable; but in the wish for an union,
between

between him and Lady Emma, Constance could not concur.

At the end of their conversation Mrs. Stavenell was going to dress for a rout in the evening, when her niece, after a little hesitation, begged to be excused accompanying her.—What! a'nt you well? said Mrs. Stavenell.—I am not ill, replied Constance, but really raking does not agree with me, and I should be glad to avoid it.—Pooh, pooh child, answered Mrs. Stavenell, don't let's have any fancies—you have walked too much, but you'll be very well again by the evening—why what the duce would you do, sit and mope at home?—Come, come, don't be foolish—there's nothing like pleasure for young people.—Indeed, replied Constance, Madam, you would oblige me by letting me stay at home.—I am sure it is very visible that late hours do not agree with me.—What, said her aunt, laughing, you're afraid of losing your colour:—now I think you had a great deal too much when you came to me, and I was glad to see it going off.—I am not anxious about that, Constance answered, but the losing it is a sign of declining health; and my mother would blame me very much for persisting in what is evidently injurious to me.—I have a perpetual head-ach; every additional irregularity increases it, and my spirits will not support me if I live so.—Why, said Mrs. Stavenell, what will you do with yourself if you stay at home?—it will be
excessive

excessive dull.—By no means, Constance replied, I have been used to be alone, and should sometimes chuse it: at other times I would spend the evening with Lady Maria Peryton, she says she shall be glad to see me.—Oh you're to go and mope with Lady Maria! returned Mrs. Stavenell—they say great wits love solitude; but I didn't know as you set up for a great wit,—but hows'ever I don't mean to vex you;—you shall live as you please:—it won't be long that you'll do that, but you must go with me this evening, and then you shall do as you please.

Constance gladly accepted the compromise, and knowing she should meet Lady Maria at the rout they were going to, she intended to tell her success, and to learn whether she was engaged for the next evening: her ladyship came in soon after Mrs. Stavenell and Miss Fitzarthur, who, while the card tables were filling, drawing her towards the window, communicated the intelligence so pleasing to both.—Then you are not engaged to-morrow, are you? said Lady Maria, will you come to me—my brother and sister will be at the opera, and I shall be alone.—This was immediately agreed on, and Constance hoped she should now be rid of Lord Farnford's wearying assiduity, and lead a life more consonant to her inclinations, and less prejudicial to her health.

C H A P. VII.

V E X A T I O N.

THE next morning brought her a letter from Lord Reycoln, naming that day fortnight for his seeing her : Lord Farnford called in just after its arrival, and Mrs. Stavenell in Constance's presence, told him of it : that it gave his lordship very little pleasure was evident ; he in a tone of affected jocularly said he must take care how he behaved now, for if he looked at Miss Fitzarthur he should expect a challenge.—I suppose, said Mrs. Stavenell, we shall have my nieces on the high ropes till he comes :—I durst to say she'll be counting the hours : Have you reckoned how many hours there is in a fortnight, my dear ?—I shall keep a calendar for Miss Fitzarthur, replied Lord Farnford :—every hour that brings Lord Reycoln nearer to his happiness, places mine at a greater distance.

Mrs. Stavenell's eyes were now fixed on Constance, who was distressed and confused : Lord Farnford had never spoken so plainly before ; and the awkwardness of her situation, and her fear that she should say more, prompted her to make some excuse to get out of the room ; she therefore, saying she would take advantage of the fineness of the morning by going into the park, took her leave of Lord Farnford, whom she heard, as she was shutting
 5 the

the door say—When does he come? I would give him a thousand pounds to keep away but six weeks longer;—I hope I could in that time persuade her.

She staid so long above stairs that she imagined Lord Farnford was gone; but she found him where she left him: she rang for the servant who was to attend her, and was quitting the room, when Lord Farnford said he would accompany her: her colour rose at this provoking civility, and she answered—by no means, my Lord, I prefer walking alone.—My dear creature, said Mrs. Stavenell, how can you be so silly and so rude?—Go with her, my Lord, I warrant you she won't dislike it;—but she's so shy:—she's like your sister Maria.

Constance now taking off her cloak, said she would not walk.—Why, hey-day exclaimed Mrs. Stavenell, what's the matter now?—Why, won't you walk because my Lord offered to walk with you?—I never see any thing so fantastical: for goodness sake, child, let's have none of these airs.—I do not mean, replied Constance mildly, to give myself airs; but if Lord Farnford does not see the impropriety of his behaviour to me, and the disagreeable situations into which his politeness draws me, it is very fit I should see it and be careful.—Why, Miss Fitzarthur, interrupted he, what is it I have done to offend you?—How can you put an ill-construction on my behaviour?—I would put the best construction on it, replied Constance;—I know that it

is attributable to a degree of attention, which I am sure it neither becomes your lordship's rank to shew me, nor mine to receive ; and did the world put no worse construction on it than I do, I should be satisfied ; but you cannot be ignorant that your politeness frequently embarrasses me :---you have seen how it has drawn the eyes of others towards me ; and, to use no disguise, I cannot but think that in receiving such particular civilities from your lordship, though they are intended only as marks of respect for Mrs. Stavenell, I put a tacit insult on Lord Reycoln :---on this account I decline them :---I beg you to suffer me to remain undistinguished, and I give you my reason for saying I will not walk if you think it necessary to accompany me.

Mrs. Stavenell was silent.---Lord Farnford after having heard Constance without interruption, replied---You are very good indeed, Miss Fitzarthur, to put on my behaviour what you think the best construction it deserves :---if I have erred, blame yourself not me, for did you know my heart, you would allow that the restraint I have submitted to was almost too painful to be borne ; but I must now vindicate myself :---Mrs. Stavenell is not ignorant of the conflict I have endured ever since I first saw you ;---she has pitied me, and given me all opportunities of mitigating my sufferings by seeing you :---the being present with you has been a temporary relief to me, but it has aggravated what I have felt at quitting you :---why should I conceal, or how can I con-

I conceal from you that I love you ?---every action of my life bespeaks it :---is it criminal ?---no surely ; 'tis virtue to admire you,---it would be stoical insensibility not to love you---if then, knowing your pre-engagement, I acknowledge my love hopeless, why will you cruelly deprive me of the only means by which I can render my misfortunes supportable.

Distressed beyond imagination at this avowal, Constance sat with her eyes fixed on the carpet, nor was she able to say a word in reply to Lord Farnford : she would have given the world to get out of the room, but she had not courage even to rise : a friendly knock at the door relieved her ; and in a few seconds in bounced Lady Emma Peryton : coming up to Miss Fitzarthur with her usual vivacity, she said :---My dear, you a'nt engaged, are you ? 'tis the sweetest morning ;---all the beau monde are in the park:---come and walk in the mall : I came to fetch you.---Then turning to Mrs. Stave-
nell before Constance could answer, she entered into conversation with her at a little distance :---this interval Lord Farnford improved, and said :---Will you forgive me, Miss Fitzarthur--I am sorry I distressed you :---forgive me and I will not offend again.---I hope, replied Constance, that your lordship is convinced your particular attention subjects me to inconvenience, and that for the future you will not render my situation painful by exposing me to the censorious judgment of the world.---Make allowances for me, said Lord Farnford, and you shall have no

reason to complain.---Constance made no answer, but taking her cloak, told Lady Emma she was ready to accept her proposition ; who, turning to her brother, said,---Won't you go with us ? how can you be so idle as to sit by the fire-side, and turn two poor damsels out, with only their footmen ?---Oh, replied his lordship, I mean to follow you :---I want to speak a word to Mrs. Stavenell---I shall overtake you before you get into the park.---This was more true than Constance wished ; they had not reached the bottom of the steps before Lord Farnford joined them ; and, as if he was a stranger to Constance's sentiments, he walked with them : she was vexed and astonished at his effrontery, but had no way to extricate herself. About the middle of the mall they met a party with whom Lady Emma was intimately, and Miss Fitzarthur slightly acquainted ; they stopped, and conversed for a few minutes, and as they were talking, Constance hear'd a gentleman who was passing behind her say to a lady he was walking with---Lord Farnford and Miss Fitzarthur !---it would be a miracle to see one without the other ;---they are inseparable.---Lady Emma did not hear this, but Constance saw that Lord Farnford, who at the mention of his name turned hastily round, did :---she took advantage of this circumstance, and said to him in a low voice,---Now is not that a proof of what I said ?---It is, answered he, and to shew you how much I prefer your ease to my own gratification, I will wish you
good

good morning.—So saying, he bowed, and quitted her. Lady Emma had communicated and received a sufficient quantity of gossip; she took leave of her company, and missing her brother asked where he was: Constance replied he had quitted them while she was talking, and had turned back: Lady Emma could scarcely believe her, but she could not long doubt: Lord Farnford did not again join them, nor did they see him during the remainder of their walk.

When they got to the top of the mall, Lady Emma proposed going round the green-park, and as soon as they had quitted the company, she said to her companion—I was very much surprised, when I came in at Mrs. Stavenell's this morning, to see you look so:—I was afraid something was the matter, till Mrs. Stavenell told me it was you and my brother had been having a tiff:—how can you, Miss Fitzarthur, be so cruel to him?—How am I cruel? returned Constance:—I should be sorry to do wrong if I knew it.—Why you are cruel, said her ladyship, in flighting him as you do:—any body may see how you treat him.—But what am I to do? Lady Emma, replied Constance, can I suffer Lord Farnford to behave as he is inclined to do, when I know that it is noticed as improper—not to flight and endeavour to repel his excessive assiduity is, I find to encourage it; and surely to submit to be marked out as the subject of his particular attention, though it may be an honour to me, is an in-

jury to Lord Reycoln ; at least my reason tells me so.—My dear Miss Fitzarthur, said Lady Emma, I would not have you do wrong ; but surely because you are under a sort of promise to Lord Reycoln, you are not obliged to treat my brother as you do :—poor fellow ! I do from my heart pity him —he says there is nothing but being with you that affords him the least pleasure, and you strive to lessen that as much as possible :—I believe he says very true, that Lord Reycoln's love for you cannot be so great as his, for if it had been, he could never have quitted you to go abroad :—the seeing you has made him completely unhappy ; you can't think how it has altered him ; he used to be so gay and so lively, and now he has never any spirits but when he is with you.—I am extremely sorry, returned Constance, when Lord Farnford's advocate paused, that I should be the occasion of uneasiness to any one, but I cannot conceive it possible, supposing even that novelty and frequent access to Mrs. Stavenell's house had drawn your brother's attention towards me, that he should suffer *me*, whom he knew to be already engaged, to make him for a moment unhappy.—My dear, said Lady Emma, how little do you know of the world !—my brother saw you and loved you :—his love for you has been every moment increasing, and will increase as long as he lives, notwithstanding your engagement to Lord Reycoln ; which I do most sincerely wish had never been made.—But can Lord Farnford Constance answered:

answered, suffer his passions to be so entirely predominant over his reason, as to overcome the consideration that I am irrevocably Lord Reycolm's ? —Not irrevocably surely ! repeated Lady Emma, —a promise made so long ago, and when you had seen so little of the world, ought not to bind you. —How can you talk so ? Lady Emma, said Constance, surely it does bind me.—No I cannot think it does, her ladyship replied :—I dare say were you to tell Lord Reycolm that my brother's love for you was entitled to a return, and that you wished yourself at liberty, he would free you from your promise.—When I could be base enough, Constance answered, to think of so scandalous an evasion, he would I am sure comply with my wish, and he must rejoice that he had it in his power to get rid of so unprincipled a creature ; but you cannot think seriously, I am convinced, Lady Emma, that I am not bound by my promise.—Indeed I do, said her ladyship, and my brother thinks so.—Then it is the hope I suppose, Constance replied, that I may be brought to the same opinion, that makes him think his labour not thrown away in persecuting me.—Do not call it persecution returned Lady Emma, I am sure it is rather adoration.—I am very much concerned, as I said before, answered Miss Fitzarthur, wishing to change the discourse, that I should make any body unhappy ; but in this instance it certainly is not my fault :—if Lord Farnford would exert a very little reason and re-

solution he might soon put an end to what he complains of.

How insensible you are, exclaimed Lady Emma. —Insensible! Constance repeated, surely in this case I ought to be insensible :—not to be so would be criminal.—Certainly not, Lady Emma replied : if you would yourself follow the advice you give my brother, and be governed by reason, you would perhaps see things in a different light.—Do not call that reason, said Constance, which would teach me to disregard my promise.—*Your* promise, rejoined her ladyship, 'tis not *your* promise to Lord Reycoln ; tis your father's promise, :—you cannot be said to have chose Lord Reycoln, for you had no choice ; he was almost the only gentleman you had ever seen,—he was your cousin, and you were asked if you had any objection to him ;—you could have none,—but is this a choice, or is it possible that a promise made in this manner can bind you ? —I know not, Constance replied, what its power is ; but I will proportion my strength to it, for it *shall* bind me.—Then, answered Lady Emma, 'tis not your *promise* but your *inclination* for Lord Reycoln that obliges you :—I was mistaken in thinking your regard for him was not very great ; but tell me, supposing Lord Reycoln out of the question, would you accept my brother?—Oh ! dear Lady Emma, said Constance, how can I tell what I should do?—I must do as my father and mother would have me.—A very good little girl indeed, returned

turned Lady Emma, in a tone of pleasantry :—but tell me in short how you like my brother ?

How can I judge after so short an acquaintance ? Constance replied : I believe it is not much above three weeks that I have known him, and—But you might tell how you liked him in three minutes, interrupted Lady Emma :—What did you think of him when you saw him first ?—This is not a fair question, said Constance, I must say I liked him prodigiously, because he's your brother.—Not for that reason returned her ladyship ; I want to know your real opinion of him. Heartily vexed at this importunity, and perceiving plainly that Lady Emma had been tutored, and furnished with arguments for the purpose, Constance resolved not to suffer from concealing her sentiments :—she had no doubt that what she said would be reported to the subject of their conversation, and she therefore answered :—Why, if I must tell the truth, the first hour I spent in Lord Farnford's company excited in me a wish.—What wish ? said Lady Emma eagerly.—That Lord Reycolin's absence, replied Constance, might not have made him like Lord Farnford.—Lady Emma stared ; she was disappointed, and looked a little displeased : but forcing a smile, she asked Miss Fitzarthur what it was in her brother that she disliked : he is, said she, universally allowed to be very handsome ;—he is quite a man of fashion ;—he has seen a great deal of the world, and he's very clever,—All this may be, and I do not

doubt is very true, Constance answered, and my prejudice may be ill-founded, but I tell you ingenuously what sentiments occurred to me.

What is it in particular you dislike ? returned his sister.—Why in the first place, said Constance, he swears shockingly, and I cannot endure to hear it.—Mercy on me ! replied Lady Emma, astonished ; if you're so squeamish, you must not walk along the streets ; for there your ears will be offended :—but pray what next ?—In the second place continued Constance, I was disgusted by his fixing his eyes so intently on me :—I could not stir but he watched me :—I could not raise my head without meeting his eyes ; and this gave me such an opinion of his confidence and curiosity as, I believe I shall never overcome.—And is this all ? said Lady Emma.—These, replied Constance, were the circumstances on which my first judgment was formed ; and since we have been in town I have, on comparing Lord Farnford's behaviour with that of some other gentlemen, found it so unrestrained, and so confident, that I own, and I hope you will not be offended at a confession you have extorted from me, that your brother is not a favourite with me, —though I acknowledge that at times there is something very pleasing in him.—He is obliged to your said Lady Emma for this acknowledgment, though it is the smallest I ever heard made in his favour ;—for I assure you, Miss Fitzarthur, the world thinks very differently of him.—It is possible and probable
answered:

answered Constance, that my judgment may be erroneous, and Lord Farnford in that case, is to be pitied for the injury I do him, and for having any thing in his exterior which shadows his real merit ; but my opinion is so insignificant, I wonder you should think of asking it.

The ladies had by this time reached the gate into Piccadilly ; and Lady Emma, in whose countenance a little anger was apparent, stopping, said she had walked a great while, and would therefore go home immediately through Hyde Park : Constance offered to accompany her to Grosvenor gate ; but she stiffly declined it, Constance said—You must let me go with you, Lady Emma, or else I am sure you will leave me angry at what I have said of my lord.—No, indeed, her ladyship answered, with affected complaisance, I shall not : I asked what you thought, and should have been disoblged if you had not told me. She then took her leave, and Miss Fitzarthur went home.

There she met with Mrs. Stavenell, and the conversation was renewed by her on the subject of Lord Farnford : her aunt seemed to entertain just the same partiality for him and his absurd passion as his sister did : she lamented his misfortune in being attached to one already engaged, and did not at all incline to think him reprehensible for suffering his reason to be blinded. Constance wearied with this topic, made an excuse to get away, and retired to another room.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

INTRUSION.

THIS was the day on which Miss Fitzarthur was to begin her new mode of living: Mrs. Stavenell was engaged out for the evening, and her niece was to spend it with Lady Maria Peryton: she had told Mrs. Stavenell of her intention, but had said nothing of it to Lady Emma, who was to be at the opera with her brother.

Constance and her aunt dined without company, and as soon as they rose from table, separated: Mrs. Stavenell went to dress, her niece to amuse herself at the harpsicord, where she was just seated when the maid came in, and produced her a letter which she said Lady Maria Peryton's servant had brought and desired she would give her when nobody saw her: Constance took it, and opening it, found these words:

' My dear Miss Fitzarthur will, I am sure, put the best construction on a request I am forced to make. I promised myself the pleasure of seeing her this evening; but an unforeseen accident obliges me to forego this gratification. I will call in Spring-garden early in the morning, and explain it; at present I have not time.— To desire her not to mention having received
' this

‘ this, is perhaps unnecessary, that it is delivered
 ‘ to her in private is a sufficient caution ; but if
 ‘ she could make an excuse to Mrs. Stavenell,
 ‘ either of indisposition, or the weather, for her
 ‘ remaining at home, it would oblige

‘ her very affectionate,

‘ MARIA PERYTON.’

What inference was to be drawn from this note, other than that Lady Maria did not wish to see her, Constance could not imagine : she suspected that Lady Emma had related the conversation they had had, and that her sister was offended at it ; but the style of the billet did not warrant this suspicion, nor did she think Lady Maria would take offence at her having spoken her sentiments perhaps too freely : she was perplexed and disturbed, but determined to do as she was desired. As soon, therefore, as she saw Mrs. Stavenell she told her that she thought it would be imprudent for her to go out ; that she had, as she knew, had a cold some days, and feared she might increase it.—Well, answered Mrs. Stavenell, but Lady Maria expects you : she will stay at home for you.—Not for me, said Constance, she would be at home whether I went or not.—But, said Mrs. Stavenell, you may go very safe : go in the chair, and wrap yourself up, and I’ll warrant you don’t catch cold.—No, replied her niece, I cannot go ; I will apologize to Lady Maria when I see her ; I am sure she will forgive me. Mrs. Stavenell tried to laugh

laugh her out of her resolution; but her reasons were too good; she, therefore, not without some sarcastic expressions at her versatility, and insisting on her sending an excuse, suffered her to remain at home.

A servant was dispatched to Portman-square, Mrs. Stavenell went out, and Constance being too much occupied by this mysterious billet to read, sat down to work: she had been alone about an hour, and the servant was just returned, when a knock at the door bespoke visitors: the door of the drawing room, where she was, was thrown open, and Lord Farnford announced—Did you say, said she to the footman, that my aunt was out?—The man answered,--My lord only asked for you, madam, he did not ask for my mistress. Half angry at this intrusion, Constance omitted telling the servant to shew him up, but this ceremony was needless; his lordship was at the heels of his messenger, and before she could recollect herself, was in the room: he came in, apologizing for breaking in on her, in a manner that indicated business: she answered coldly, that she imagined the servant had neglected to tell him Mrs. Stavenell was from home:--he replied, he knew she was, but that his visit was in consequence of a message which Lady Maria had just received. Your servant, said he, alarmed us by saying you were not well enough to venture out, and, fearing you were worse than you owned, I came myself to inquire
after

after you.---Constance thanked him for his civility, saying she had got a slight cold, and preferred staying at home: but added she, I understood you were engaged at the opéra.---I have heard every song and seen every dance ten thousand times he replied, and, as Emma went with a party I got excused, Here a pause ensued; and Constance felt very uneasy; she, however, hoped, as he had always many engagements, that he would soon go; but he seemed to have taken up his residence there for the evening: she would not encourage him by conversation, and therefore remained silent; this had no effect, for he forced her to talk; he never was at a loss for topics, and it was in his power to make a tête à tête very agreeable, but this supposes an absence of fear: a blessing which Miss Fitzarthur did not at that time enjoy: whenever he spoke she trembled lest he should distress her as he had done in the morning; but he seemed disposed to behave very rationally: she determined not to prolong his stay, by ordering tea, but the servant without directions brought it in: how to get rid of him now she knew not, as he had a pretence for staying; her apprehensions were indeed relieved, as while the footman was in the room she was secure. Tea was over, and Lord Farnford making a motion to go, asked her if she expected any company; embarrassed and afraid of giving him even the smallest encouragement, she replied, that though she did not expect company particularly,

particularly,, she was at home to every body.-- I may then, said he, hope for half an hour's uninterrupted conversation with you ; squib visits will not begin yet. Constance, confused, frightened, and heartily angry at his assurance, said not a word, and he proceeded---I know, he said, that I have displeased you by what I unguardedly suffered to escape my lips this morning, and I own that you are justly offended : my business is to beg your forgiveness, and to promise amendment.--To avoid hearing more, she interrupted him by saying, that she only desired him not to subject her to censure, and that she would endeavour to forget what was passed.--You may ; you will forget it, he replied, and you will forget how the confession I made was wrung from me ; and could I obtain as friendly a power of oblivion I might hope for peace ; but this is more than will be granted me : I am fated to love you, though I know you are another's : I am ordained to suffer, and that in silence, but this---at these words his lordship was interrupted, and his auditor relieved by the sudden opening of the door, and a message from Lord Calorne that if it was perfectly convenient he would wait on Miss Fitzarthur.--It is perfectly convenient, she answered, desire Lord Calorne to walk up.--Lord Farnford said, he was sorry he was come, and rose.

Personal merit always secured Lord Calorne a welcome ; but his visit now was particularly opportune :

fortune: Constance received him with pleasure, and her countenance expressed it: the conversation was on general subjects, it was agreeably supported, and she had almost forgotten her late panic; yet not knowing how short Lord Calorne's visit might be, and fearing being again left to Lord Farnford, she could not be quite easy: Lord Calorne intimated as a reason for seeing her so soon, that he had a letter from Lord Reycoln; this hint Lord Farnford would not take, he kept his place, and drove Lord Calorne to the necessity of pointing out a passage in Lord Reycoln's letter which he wished Miss Fitzarthur to see, and which he was evidently desirous to communicate and converse on in a less restrained way.

Soon after, Lord Calorne rose to go; but Constance urged his stay, saying, she was wholly unengaged, and as Lord Farnford had done her the honor to call in, she was glad of the presence of a third to supply her deficiency of conversation: Lord Calorne complied, and now her only fear was lest Lord Farnford should in revenge out-fit him; that he meant to do so was in a short time past all doubt, and she was entirely at a loss to extricate herself; but resolved, if it were possible, to defeat Lord Farnford's purpose. Lord Calorne again rose; when, driven to extremities, she looked at her watch and said---It is not yet nine o'clock; it wants a quarter; stay till the clock strikes, and then we shall all break up, and I will go and nurse my cold. This

Manceuvre

manœuvre succeeded; at nine the triumvirate parted, and Lord Farnford was forced to go; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Lord Calorne go before him, his carriage being first up: the few minutes that this obliged him to wait he improved by repeating his protestations of sorrow for what he had said in the morning, and his promises of all possible future circumspection: he then, to the no small joy of Miss Fitzarthur, took his leave, and departed.

C H A P. IX.

D I S C R E T I O N.

THE next morning, before breakfast-time, Lady Maria removed all Constance's fears of having given her offence by calling on her: Mrs. Stavenell, in consequence of being out late the preceding evening, was not yet up; and as she chose to breakfast in her chamber, her niece hoped for an explanation of the note she had received: as soon as they were alone, Lady Maria said---I am afraid I have drawn on myself a suspicion, not only of incivility in the extreme, but of want of regard for you; or else I am sure I have puzzled you by my extraordinary request last night---To tell you the truth, Miss Fitzarthur answered, you have puzzled me; but I knew as you were so kind

kind as to say you would call this morning, it would be explained, and I assure you I suspected nothing, unless for about a moment, that I had offended you.---Indeed, said Lady Maria, it wore a very odd appearance; it was done out of concern for you, though I failed in what I intended; and I now heartily repent that I did it: but I will make myself intelligible; I found Mrs. Stavenell had told my brother you were to be with me, and that, for that reason, he would not go to the opera; I feared he might render your visit very disagreeable, and that, and other considerations made me think it prudent to prevent your meeting; but he outwitted me; for he went out soon after your servant came, and on his return I learned that he had been with you: I then sincerely wished I had not written to you, as I deprived myself of a pleasure for no purpose, and by my excessive caution exposed you still more than if you had met him at our house.

From this excuse, so highly satisfactory, and so commendatory of Lady Maria's prudence, it was evident that she, as well as her sister, and Mrs. Stavenell, was acquainted with Lord Farnford's attachment to Miss Fitzarthur; who thanked her for her attention and her care to save her from embarrassment, however it had succeeded.---And pray, said Lady Maria, how did my brother behave? madly or reasonably?---Tolerably well, replied Constance, Lord Galerne came in.---Do you know

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know, resumed her ladyship, after a pause, and looking stedfastly at Constance, how terribly he has suffered his passions to over rule his reason? I was afraid lest he should improve the opportunity of seeing you alone, and tell you that which of all things he should most solicitously conceal. Constance was silent, and she continued :--Do you know, for you must know it in order to guard against it, that the engagement you are already under has not been sufficient to deter him from becoming most violently attached to you?--Perhaps he has had prudence enough to keep it from you; but I tell you that you may in your behaviour, to him avoid every thing that can be construed into encouragement; for a small glimmering of success will excite hope in him, and I really believe he does not think it impossible to win you from Lord Reycoln.--I am very sorry for it, said Constance, I offended Lord Farnford this morning by refusing to walk when he offered to accompany me; and being provoked at my refusal, he told me what I wished never to hear: however Lord Reycoln will come over soon, and Lord Farnford has promised to be silent.--I pity him, said Lady Maria, because he is really unhappy: but I blame him for suffering himself to be so; he sinks without exerting himself in the smallest degree; if there were really any prospect of success for him, I should not wonder at him, but it seems to me so hopeless a case that I cannot acquit him of folly:

folly;---as I am sure, she continued, that you are above taking pleasure in the pain of another, I need not hint to you the propriety of shunning him; you can no other way avoid his troublesome importunity, or depress his expectations; for it is not impossible that he may think your engagement to Lord Reycoln his only obstacle.

Perceiving this was said to discover her sentiments respecting Lord Farnford, Constance thought it incumbent on her to be as explicit with Lady Maria as she had been with her sister: she, therefore related the conversation between her and Lady Emma; and so far was Lady Maria from styling her *cruel or insensible*, that she commended her resolution, and was pleased with her frankness.

From a free conversation with Lady Maria, Constance learned much of the character of her brother and sister, which, though favourably drawn, did not increase her veneration for them. Her ladyship mentioned Lady Emma's attachment to Lord Calorne, and intimated a wish that their union and their happiness were not so diametrically opposite as they appeared from the difference of their tempers: she seemed to think Lord Calorne rather inclined to the match, but yet, repelled by Lady Emma's foibles. Constance joined in her commendation of him, and secretly wished the attraction of the elder sister's good sense had been more powerful than that of the younger's beauty. --Do you know Lord Calorne's sister? said Lady Maria.

Maria.---No, said Constance, I never saw her; but I have heard Mrs. Stavenell mention her slightly: I have often thought to ask him after her, for I do not recollect having heard him speak of her in the two visits he has made here, and when he was at Marstonbury he used to talk much of her, and to wish I was acquainted with her.—You must not expect, said Lady Maria, to hear of her; and I would advise you not to inquire after her; she has married without the knowledge of her family, and her father will not see her: her brother has done all in his power to effect a reconciliation, but finding it impossible, he takes part with neither, and behaves so prudently as to please both sides.—And is she well married? said Constance.—Very well, in my opinion, answered Lady Maria, though in the opinion of the world not so; he is a gentleman of a good family, with considerable expectations, but his fortune at present is small: a man of unimpeached character, and by no means an unsuitable match for her.—Then what could be her reason for marrying clandestinely? was Constance's question.—I suppose, said Lady Maria, a fear of being refused if it was proposed to Lord Ormington, and the disagreeable life she led at home. Lady Ormington died when her children were very young, and his lordship finding it necessary to take a mistress into the house, was prevailed on by his friends to send his daughter to school; there she was kept as long as there could be any excuse for it,

it, and was then taken home to live in a most uncomfortable way, with no other society than a governess, and no amusements but what she found out for herself: she had an apartment allotted her, and a coach kept for her, in which she was suffered to go every day for an airing in Hyde Park, with her governess; and this was the only occasion on which she went out. Her father had indeed so much prudence as to take another house for his mistress, and to place his daughter at the head of his table, but if he had company she dined alone. In this situation it was not to be expected she would long continue: the gentleman who lived in the next house had a brother who was come to him on a visit; his notice was attracted by seeing her walk for exercise in a paved court behind Lord Ormington's house, he soon grew acquainted with her, and in a few months prevailed on her to go to France with him. After every thing was settled for the journey her courage failed, and Lord Calorne coming home, she dreaded offending him, and determined to remain in her prison; but he being again called away, and she thereby reduced to her former solitude, she once more consented, and went off. They have not been in England since, nor do I imagine they will come over till their finances increase, but I have reason to think Lord Calorne has seen her by stealth.

Here the conversation was interrupted by a message from Mrs. Stavenell, desiring Lady Maria would come

to her ; she and Constance went, and, after an hour's gossip, separated, Lady Maria going home, and Miss Fitzarthur to return a few morning calls.

C H A P. X.

P A T E R N A L A F F E C T I O N.

C O N S T A N C E found it impossible to pursue the scheme she had projected for avoiding continual engagements : if she staid at home Lord Farnford came, justified his intrusions by asserting that they could not involve her in the evil she apprehended from his attention to her in public, and insisted on the privilege of seeing her, as the only means of enabling him to put a restraint on his behaviour when there were witnesses of it : if she spent an evening in Portman-square, she was sure of seeing him ; in short, she found herself obliged to accompany Mrs. Stavenell, in order to avoid his more particular importunity, or to write to Marstonbury to desire she might be recalled- This, on many accounts, she was particularly averse to ; her situation, notwithstanding its inconveniences, had charms ; she expected Lord Reycoln in a few days, and she knew that by so violent a measure Mrs. Stavenell must be offended ; she therefore
contented

contented herself with telling Lord Farnford, one day when he was more troublesome than usual, what he would force her to do, and it had its effect; he altered his behaviour, and though they met at his house, at Mrs. Stavenell's, in public, and almost wherever she went, she had no reason to complain of him.

She lived on the most intimate terms with his sisters, and particularly with Lady Maria, who would not suffer her when she called to use so much ceremony as sending in her name: if I am at home said she, I am to you; and you generally can tell where to find me. To comply with this friendly wish to dispence with all formality, Constance used the liberty she gave her, and one morning, Lady Maria having been ill and confined to the house for some days, she took her work, and went to sit with her: she found in the room with her a young woman whom she had never before seen, and whose appearance excited her attention: she was pretty, but had a melancholy countenance, and it was easy to perceive she had been crying: on Lady Maria's lap there lay a little baby, not above four or five months old, which seemed to belong to the stranger.—What said Constance, after the first salutations, Lady Maria nursing!—Indeed I am, her ladyship replied, and I will shew you one of the loveliest babies you ever saw—I know you love children. She then turned the child round to Miss Fitzarthur, who struck

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with its beauty, took it in her arms, and went towards the window to admire it : when she was on the other side of the room she heard the young woman offer to go, and Lady Maria desire her not ; for that Lord Farnford would be there in a minute : I have sent for him, said she, and he does not know you are here.—Imagining she might possibly interrupt further conversation, Constance went into the adjoining room with the baby, who seemed perfectly happy with its new nurse :

Lord Farnford presently came into the room she had quitted, and in a tone of familiarity and surprise, said to the stranger—Ha ! is it you ?—She replied in a low voice, and Lady Maria then said—Miss Fitzarthur is just come in ; she is nursing Edward in the next room.—Lord Farnford came to her, and addressed her with—Why madam ! Edward is honoured, you make a charming nurse ; 'tis a pity Lord Reycoln is not here to see you.—She answered him with observing on the beauty of her little charge, but he paying no attention to her commendation, said carelessly—I have seen the young gentleman often enough, he is no novelty to me. Lady Maria came to fetch the child, and the mother presently after went away with it.

The natural observation, when Constance had parted with her play thing, was—What a sweet baby it is ! and the consequent question—Whose is it ?—Lady Maria said nothing, but looked at her brother, who replied ;—It is that young woman's
who

who brought it.—How nicely it was dressed! said Constance.—Yes, answered Lady Maria, it's father can afford to keep it nicely dressed.—Maria, said Lord Farnford, looking seriously, you have betrayed me, I am sure.—Indeed, she returned, you are mistaken.—There is some mystery, said Constance, belongs to this little one; I must not ask any more questions.—You may, replied his lordship, say what you please about it; I am sure Maria has told you.

At this instant a servant came in and whispered Lord Farnford, who answered:—Tell her I am engaged; I cannot come to her.—You are not engaged, replied his sister; how can you be so cruel? go to her, or I protest she shall come here again.—His lordship muttered, and evidently displeased went out of the room:

Why surely, said Constance, I cannot have asked an improper question! I did wrong, I fear, to say any thing about the child.—My brother would perhaps think so, answered Lady Maria; but I am always glad when he is so pushed.—Why, who is this baby then? Constance asked.—I am sorry to say, replied her ladyship, that it is his: The young woman that you saw here is it's mother; she wants to speak to Lord Farnford, and you may perceive how *willingly* he goes to her, and yet I assure you he was fond of her to excess till very lately; he now grows indifferent to her, and slights her shamefully. I have suffered

more uneasiness from this than from all his other amours; for, however oddly it may sound, I must confess myself in a great measure the occasion of this connection.—That is impossible I am sure, said Constance.—I will prove it to you, rejoined Lady Maria, though indeed my part in the business was innocent, and my intentions were good: one of the sisters of this young woman was a school-fellow of mine, and from familiarity of disposition we soon grew attached, and were in each others confidence: I learned that she was educated at the expence of a distant relation, and that, though her father had a peerage, his finances was inadequate to the decent maintenance of a very numerous family: this girl, who is now not nineteen, was at the time of my leaving school, about five years old, and I prevailed on her father and mother to resign the care of her to me: I sent her to supply my place; but, as we then lived with Mrs. Stavenell, she spent her holidays always at home, where I had the inexpressible pleasure of providing for her, and have many letters from her, telling me she had overgrown her frocks, or wanted a new pair of shoes. When my brother came home from his tour we were to keep house together, and I should have been very happy in having my ward with me, but I soon found it would be dangerous to let him see her: I therefore continued her at school till she was sixteen, and resisted all her fond importunity to live with me when she

she left it ; but all my caution was vain, he soon got scent of her, and her father, hoping he would marry her, suffered him to visit her : I then found it useless to keep her at a distance, and tried all I could do to fortify her, by prophesying what has since proved true, against his intreaties. I might as well have been silent ; I am afraid I was counteracted by some who ought to have supported me ; it was impossible to make her distrust him, and she now rues it. Her near relations have deserted her, and she is placed with an aunt a little way out of town, where she lives on an allowance from my brother, for whom she retains an affection that seems to increase as he flights her. I would not be thought to *encourage* people in her predicament, but considering myself as bound, in some measure, to take care of her, I will always afford her what comfort I can, and indeed for her own sake I would do it, as I am convinced a susceptible heart is her greatest fault. Is it not a pity, Miss Fitzarthur, that after all the pains I have taken with her to improve one of the most elegant female minds that ever inhabited beauty, to cultivate every good principle, and to eradicate every foible, I should be so defeated, and my sweet girl so branded ? But these things are not thought of here : to ruin the peace of an innocent creature is but gallantry in the opinion of young men of fashion.

As Lady Maria said these words her brother came in again.—Well, said he, does Miss Fitzar-

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thur know Edward's pedigree ; has she heard how his father and mother are respectively allied ? what marriages and intermarriages and descendants there have been in every branch and from every branch of the family ? I dare say Lady Maria has been a very good herald ; You are always very kind to me, continued he to his sister, you never fail to expose me ; but Miss Fitzarthur will make allowances, and not be so severe on me as you are.—Without a compliment, returned Constance, I should suspect I erred if I differed from Lady Maria's opinion, and in such a case surely no allowance can be made.—Do not be so cruel, said Lord Farnford ; as for Maria she is most unmerciful.—Indeed, Constance answered, I cannot think you deserve any mercy.—Well, replied his lordship, this need not be the subject of our discourse : I assure you I hear enough of it ; you have been brought up in a nunnery, and so think a vast deal more of such things than they deserve ; but you will soon find I am not singular : how will you Miss Fitzarthur undertake to say your Lord Reycoln may not at this moment have half a dozen such claimants ?—God forbid he should have one, said Constance ; if I find he has, I shall beg to be released from my engagement ; but if such connections are common they are nevertheless infamous.—Nonsense, replied his lordship, affecting to laugh at her : why I am better than half the world, for I have settled an annuity on my brat ; he is very well off, and Maria is very fond

fond of him : as for my sister Emma she would not see him for the universe ; I suppose she is afraid any body should say it is her's, for Mrs. Stavenell says it is very much like her.—What, said Constance, does Mrs. Stavenell know how rich you are ?—Oh yes, answered he, all the world knows it ; Mrs. Stavenell has often nursed him.

Constance concluded her visit, and went home astonished at Lord Farnford's libertinism and effrontery. No wish was manifested that his crime were retrievable ; no painful remembrance was excited : he spoke with no tenderness of her he had injured ; but in all he said endeavoured to justify himself. More disgusted than ever with him, and pleased with the exalted generosity of Lady Maria's character, she heartily rejoiced that her obligation to Lord Reycoln permitted her enjoying the friendship of the sister secure from the addresses of the brother.

Notwithstanding it was apparent from the alteration in Lord Farnford's conduct that all his hopes respecting Miss Fitzarthur were at an end, and she had every reason to believe he had gained that victory over himself which was necessary to her living in a tolerable state of peace, his younger sister was his unwearied advocate, till Constance intimated that a continuance of such importunity as she had hitherto submitted to, would force her to quit London ; she then was silent on the subject, but as if she had wanted some topic to replace that

which was prohibited, acquainted Constance with her partiality for Lord Calorne: a full persuasion seemed to occupy her ladyship's mind that he was much attached to her, but that he delighted to torment her; and she began pumping to know what he said of her. Constance endeavoured to recollect whether in the two visits he had made her he had ever spoken of Lady Emma, but she did not remember it: this the latter attributed to forgetfulness; her hope seemed too well founded to be shaken, and she was very solicitous to impress on Constance's mind his cruelty in affecting to disregard her. She talked till she prevailed on her hearer to pity though she condemned her weakness; the happiness of her life evidently depended on Lord Calorne, whose motive for behaving as she represented, supposing her not to be sanguine in her expectations, was not easily discoverable: Lady Emma now condescended to ask how in her place Miss Fitzarthur would act, and received for answer, that she would, whatever it cost her, slight Lord Calorne. This was harsh doctrine to a mind so enervated and so prejudiced; but she promised to follow it, and artfully endeavoured to engage her adviser to become a mediator between them; but in this she failed; it was an office of which under the best circumstances Constance was not ambitious, and, therefore, referring her to the method she had proposed, she assured her nothing could be so effectual; a disclosure of her griefs seemed to have
relieved

relieved Lady Emma's mind, and she again promised to obey her injunctions.

But however good her intentions might be, her ladyship failed most egregiously in the execution : Constance frequently met her and Lord Calorne in the same company, and soon discovered her difficulty to assume a degree of haughtiness, which, as it was unnatural, was perfectly ridiculous, and insupportable : a word, a look, from Lord Calorne threw down all the structure raised on this unstable foundation : her affected reserve was laughed at, and Mrs. Stavenell's means to forward the match, on which she seemed every day more bent, were so opposite to what Constance had prescribed, that it was impossible to sustain her newly assumed character ; beside this all in the circle of her acquaintance were included in her confidence, and Lord Calorne must have been not only blind, but deaf, if he had not been sensible how highly he was favoured by Lady Emma Peryton.

It was with concern that Constance saw her perpetually exposing herself to contempt and ridicule by her obvious partiality : Lord Calorne was to her, and to all polite, but there was nothing in his behaviour that indicated a distinction of any kind. Lady Emma now accounted for what she termed his *sighting* her, by supposing that some one who had got at her sentiments had betrayed her to him, and that this encouraged him to affect a disregard of her. Such a breach of confidence, with

respect to her ladyship, could not have been attended with any aggravating circumstances; she was not scrupulous in her choice of those she admitted to her confidence, nor was she lavish of her injunctions to secrecy; and it was as probable that what she communicated might be told by others as well with a view to serve, as to hurt her interest: but the interposition of a third person was unnecessary; Lady Emma's eyes, Lady Emma's countenance, and the whole of Lady Emma's unguarded conduct sufficiently evinced the state of her mind.

C H A P. XI.

GENEROSITY.

THE expectation of Lord Reycoln's return excited in Constance's mind no emotion so great as that of fear, lest in his absence he should have formed ideas of her which on their meeting would be disappointed: she, however, was obliged to bear the raillery of Mrs. Stavenell, who seemed unable to conceive that two young people under such circumstances, could be less than immoderately rejoiced at the prospect of seeing each other: her niece endeavoured by a candid avowal of her sentiments, and by professing without disguise that Lord

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Reycoln's

Reycoln's return would give her great pleasure, to blunt the edge of her wit; but it would not do: Mrs. Stavenell would not believe her sincere in saying that whatever anxiety she felt on the occasion was such as the expectation of meeting a brother would excite; Lord Reycoln and Miss Fitzarthur were professedly and avowedly lovers, and without considering that there is indeed a wide difference between a voluntary and a directed choice, she concluded that they must be violently enamoured: if Constance was silent, she was thinking of Lord Reycoln; if her spirits were raised, the hope of seeing him was the occasion; so that in her own defence she was obliged to wish for his arrival, to release her from a very troublesome, though good humoured persecution.

In his last letter he had named the day of his intended return to London. Mrs. Stavenell was so thoroughly convinced that, as he knew where Miss Fitzarthur was, her house would be the first he visited, that she put herself to some inconvenience to stay at home that day, in order that she might be present at a meeting which should verify her sagacity.

As the hour of his arrival was uncertain dinner was sent up without waiting for him: every carriage that was within hearing was now thought to be his, but the evening came, and midnight came without Lord Reycoln. Mrs. Stavenell was certain nothing less than some terrible accident could have

have detained him ; but Constance, who did not think a signification of an intention, positively obligatory, concluded that she should soon know the cause of his stay, and rested satisfied.

The week elapsed without any intelligence of him, and she began to be uneasy : the arrival of Mr. Stavenell was now equally expected, and news came of him first : on his landing at Dover he dispatched a letter to his mother, of which this is an extract.

• An accident has obliged me to delay my journey to town, and the pleasure of seeing you a few days longer than I at first intended.—I told you in my last that for the sake of seeing some friends, I should remain a short time at Calais : I had been there four days, and had just returned one evening to the inn, intending to sail the next day, when on entering my room I saw, lying on the ground, a note, which I immediately concluded had been put under the door : I took it up ; it was directed for me, and was to the following purport.

“ Sir,

“ I hear you are English and a gentleman.—I am in want of protection, will you come into the gallery at eight this evening.

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ A. R.”

• It was within a few minutes of the time appointed, and I went to the gallery, not knowing whom or what I was to meet, but guessed, by the hand in

in which the request was written, that it was a lady.—The clock had just struck when I heard a door open behind me :—I turned round, but the place was so dark I could only perceive my conjecture was right :—I went towards her, and saw she was in a riding dress, and followed by a woman whom I supposed her servant.—My curiosity was excited ;—I spoke to the lady, said I was desired to be there at that time ; and begged to know if it was from her that I had received a billet.—She held a handkerchief before her face, as if desirous to conceal it, and in a very low voice answered, it was she who had requested to see me : I found by her accent, though she spoke good English, that she was French, and endeavoured by assurances that whatever assistance I could afford her she might command, to give her confidence which she seemed much to want : she then told me that she was going to England, that a gentleman who was to accompany her, had promised to meet her there for the purpose, but had disappointed her ;—that she had waited for him three days ;—that she had now no hopes of his coming, and meant, if I would protect her during the passage, to sail without him :—if it was an improper favour to ask, or inconvenient to me to grant, she would, she said return to Paris.

A request which was in itself, and in the manner of making it so modest, and in effect a compliment to me, I could not have refused to any one ;

' one:—to a lady under such distressing circum-
 ' stances to have hesitated a moment would have
 ' been brutality :—by her desire I saw her no more
 ' till we were to sail, and then accompanied her
 ' to the Packet. On inquiring of her what was
 ' her scheme of action, I learnt that she had an
 ' uncle in London, to whom she proposed writing,
 ' and to whose house she would immediately, on
 ' receiving an answer from him, go : I there-
 ' fore offered to postpone my journey to town till
 ' then ; she at first declined it, but on my insisting
 ' on it, and representing to her that she still stood
 ' in need of a protector, she accepted my proposal,
 ' and on its arrival I shall set off with her. She is
 ' just come into the room to know what she must do
 ' with her letter : I tell her I am writing to you
 ' about her, and ask by what name I must describe
 ' her :—she says Adelaide, which is the only name
 ' she chuses to reveal.'

Mrs. Stavenell, though she was vexed at an acci-
 dent that postponed her seeing her son, could not
 but approve his conduct, while her niece, whose
 heart was ever ready to applaud benevolence, was
 lavish in his praise. In a few days after the receipt
 of this intelligence, one of Mr. Stavenell's servants
 who had travelled with him, arrived in town, and
 brought the following letter to Mrs. Stavenell.

' The post does not travel fast enough for me :
 ' if I wait for it I must defer the pleasure of seeing
 ' my dearest mother some hours longer than is ab-
 ' solutely

‘ solutely necessary : I have therefore dispatched
‘ my man with this, to apprise you of my being,
‘ at the time you receive it, on the road, and I
‘ hope in three hours after his arrival to be with
‘ you.

‘ The letter Mademoiselle Adelaïde wrote to her
‘ uncle has been answered, but not by him : he is
‘ dead, and his executor is a stranger to her. The
‘ distress this information has occasioned her is in-
‘ conceivable, from which, and the reluctance she
‘ manifests to return home, I guess she has left her
‘ friends privately, and I am inclined to think there
‘ is a lover in the case, but this is mere surmise :
‘ she says she has no alternative ; she must return to
‘ France, but she cannot, till she has written to her
‘ relations there. I own her appearance and be-
‘ haviour have interested me much for her, and I
‘ have rashly, and perhaps imprudently offered her
‘ a temporary asylum in your house : with you,
‘ therefore may I beg she may remain till her let-
‘ ters are answered ; otherwise, as I cannot think
‘ myself justified in leaving such a young woman so
‘ exposed, I must stay here with her, till she is in a
‘ state of greater security :—But, having every rea-
‘ son to believe you will readily comply with this
‘ request, I shall without waiting a return, set out,
‘ and present to you and Miss Fitzarthur, whom I
‘ suppose to be with you, my inconnüe ; for I yet
‘ know her by no other name than that of Adelaïde,
‘ and so cautious was she, that her letter from Lon-
‘ don

‘ don was directed to her by that name only : what
‘ this augurs I cannot at present discover, but I am
‘ firmly persuaded it is no ill :—I know the idea
‘ that suggests itself to you is either that your fa-
‘ pient son is taken in, or that he chuses this me-
‘ thod of introducing a daughter-in-law to you : the
‘ latter is foundationless, I assure you ; as for the
‘ former, I own it is not impossible that after hav-
‘ ing escaped imposition on the other side of the
‘ water, my credulity may be played on in the Bri-
‘ tish dominions ; at this however I am not at all
‘ concerned : if I err, it is on the side of humanity,
‘ and if I have any skill in physiognomy I shall not
‘ repent what I have done.

‘ I am sure her appearance will operate with you
‘ in her favour—she is I imagine hardly twenty,
‘ more than tolerably pretty, and by no means de-
‘ ficient in point of understanding and education ;
‘ she speaks good English, and if one may judge by
‘ external appearances, is a person of fortune. I
‘ really pity the uneasiness I occasion her : I am
‘ convinced she is afraid of me, though I do all I
‘ can to inspire her with confidence ; she is never
‘ with me excepting at meals, or when she has any
‘ thing on which she wishes to advise with me ; and
‘ I have never yet seen her without her maid, who
‘ seems wonderfully attached to her. I like her
‘ caution and have told her so.

‘ Satisfied that though I may be the dupe of arti-
‘ fice, you will admit a probability on the other
‘ side

‘ side, I shall venture to introduce her as what she
 ‘ appears to be, and am, with the most affectionate
 ‘ remembrance of my cousin, and the greatest re-
 ‘ spect for yourself,

‘ Your very obedient son,

‘ CHARLES STAVENELL.’

Mrs. Stavenell read the letter to herself, and laughing heartily at it, gave it to her niece, who could not discover the occasion of her mirth:—Well, said Mrs. Stavenell, what do you think of it?—I ought first, Constance answered, to know what are your sentiments.—Why then, said she, I think Charles is taken in indeed:—I durst to say these are two French Madams that had’nt money enough in their pockets to bring them to town, and so they thought if they could manage to make the gentleman treat ’em, why it was very clever:—but for goodness sake let’s see ’em—though may-be they’ll give their beau the slip; ten to one they’ll not come here.—Why should you think so Madam? replied Constance.—Because it’s most natural to think so, Mrs. Stavenell returned.—I’ll lay my life Charles’s birds fly before they get here:—they’ll come into London, but depend upon it not here; they’ll make some excuse to get away, or take a French leave of him, and the girls will be delighted to think how nice they took him in: but if they do come, why I shall be very glad to see them.

The difficulty which those of ingenuous natures,
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and who are unacquainted with the deceits of the world, find to believe others can design to impose on them, inclined Constance rather to suspect her aunt's judgment, than to think with her : she concluded that this was some unhappy young woman who deserved regard ; and, desirous to know if it was not in her power to soften whatever distress she might labour under, she waited for Mr. Stavenell's arrival with much less patience than for Lord Reycoln's, whom in this new expectation Mrs. Stavenell, to her great relief, seemed almost to have forgotten. Preparations for the reception of Mr. Stavenell and his ward were immediately made, his mother nevertheless imagining all care for the latter, though it was necessary, was superfluous.

C H A P. XII.

D I S T R E S S.

ABOUT six o'clock in the evening expectation ceased. Mr. Stavenell arrived, and entered the room *alone* : after the first congratulations and expressions of joy were over, Constance's hopes sinking and her fears rising, Mr. Stavenell asked his mother if she had received his letter : being answered that she had, before either of the ladies could make

make any inquiries, he said—Then I may introduce Mademoiselle ; I could not prevail on her to come in till I had seen you, lest by any accident my man should not have been arrived.--He then went down to fetch her, and Constance, who felt for the awkwardness of her situation, followed him, that she might lessen her embarrassment by meeting her : the stranger guest was in the hall when Miss Fitzarthur reached it : she took her hand, and with expressions of the sincerest welcome led her to Mrs. Stavenell, who could scarcely forbear telling her how she had been deceived in her opinion of her. Every instance of kindness was received by the stranger with polite gratitude, while Constance who wanted no other recommendation of her than her being distressed, busied herself in adjusting her baggage in her chamber, and in endeavours to render the novelty of the scene less irksome to her.

Mrs. Stavenell's curiosity was excited to know something of her story, and more than Adelaide thought proper to reveal ; she said little, appeared thoughtful, and melancholy, and the tears frequently stood in her eyes. However in the course of the evening, fortunately no visitors coming in, she grew encouraged by the reception she had met with, her timidity lessened, and she seemed inclined to gratify the impatience which Mrs Stavenell could neither suppress nor conceal : she confessed that she had left her mother's house under a pretence of visiting a relation at Calais, but really with

with an intention of coming to England ; she added that she had been punished for her fault, for that she had been most cruelly deceived.

The little she communicated did not answer the purpose of allaying curiosity ; and Mrs. Stavenell asked so many questions that Constance heartily pitied Adelaide's situation : at length after supper, finding herself embarrassed, and, as if fearing a misconstruction of her reserve, she said that as she could not doubt the honour of those who had already been so generous to her, she would not make a secret of the occasion of her coming to England, and hoped that in return for her confidence, she should meet with advice how she should act. Mrs. Stavenell who would at any time have purchased this amusement, joined by her son and niece, assured her she might depend on the most inviolable secrecy, and all the advice and assistance they could give her : she then, after a little hesitation, said :

‘ I am a native of Paris, and my name is Rous-
‘ son : my father was of a respected protestant fa-
‘ mily, and at the head of one of the first mercantile
‘ houses in France ; he has been dead near three
‘ years, and I am his only child : a few months be-
‘ fore his death he became acquainted with a gentle-
‘ man who was travelling through our country,
‘ and who most unhappily for me, chose me as the
‘ object of his regard ; this gentleman afterwards
‘ left us, and I saw him no more till about half a
‘ year ago : he then returned to Paris, renewed his
‘ acquaintance

acquaintance, and seeing that the loss of my father was indeed a most severe one to me, he prevailed on my weakness and credulity to consent to accompany him to London, where I expected to find my father's brother, who I knew would willingly receive me.

I was induced to this ill-judged determination equally by my hope of finding happiness there, and by the certainty that I could never expect a minute's comfort at home : my mother though an English woman, is in consequence of a foreign education, of the Roman church, and soon after the death of my father married a gentleman of the same persuasion : the natural consequence of this was my living in a state of continual persecution ; all means were tried to prevail on me to become a convert to their opinions, but as my father, perhaps foreseeing this, had taken the utmost care to confirm me in the principles in which I had been educated, I withstood their attempts. I do not pretend to say that this was the motive to my leaving my native country, but it was a strong persuasive aided by my own inclination.

My mother had a sister who lived within a few miles of Calais, whose religious principles were the same as her's : thither I was invited, but as I knew the purpose for which I was to go, I had for a long time evaded it : I now accepted it as a means of escape from my mother's house ; and it was agreed between him who has so deceived me
and

‘ and myself, that he should meet me at a small
‘ distance from my aunt’s, that we should then go
‘ on to Calais, and embark in the next Packet for
‘ England ; but he was not at the place appointed :
‘ my aversion again to encounter persecution, and
‘ a hope that I might meet him at Calais, urged me
‘ to proceed : I came to the inn at which I knew
‘ we were to wait the sailing of the vessel ; there,
‘ half mad with terror and vexation, my resolution
‘ not to return home still most unreasonably in-
‘ creasing ; without a creature whose face I had
‘ ever seen, excepting my maid, I remained three
‘ days. I then determined to sail in the next Pac-
‘ ket, if any ladies were going—in this I
‘ was disappointed, there were no ladies, and I
‘ could not learn the name of any passenger but
‘ Mr. Stavenell, an English Gentleman : a thought
‘ suggested itself that I might ask his protection ; I
‘ was grown so desperate that I could not judge be-
‘ tween propriety and impropriety, and I took the
‘ unpardonable liberty of writing to him : how
‘ troublesome I have since been to him is too well
‘ known.’

And pray said Mr. Stavenell when she ceased,
not to talk of trouble, for I gratified myself much
more than I could assist you, what do you purpose
doing ? —you cannot think of returning to Paris !—
I must, replied Adelaide ; but, if I might have
permission to remain here a few days, I would not
do it till I have written to my mother, and made
some

Some conditions on which I might safely return.—Mrs. Stavenell, who was too much pleased with the oddity of this adventure to think of parting with her guest, said it must not be,—she must not write; she should be her visitor for months to come, and added,—I am sure my niece's face says you must not go. Constance joined her wishes to Mrs. Stavenell's invitation, and Adelaide accepted it till she could return, secure from all the evils she had endured, to her mother.

It was very unwillingly that Constance submitted to the necessary separation at the hour of rest: she accompanied Adelaide to her chamber, where her maid was waiting for her; and as the girl understood not one word of English, her presence was no restraint on half an hour's conversation; the ladies parted with mutual regret, and with a reciprocal promise that she who rose first should awake the other.

In the morning Constance went into Mademoiselle Rousson's chamber, and found her rising; as soon as she was dressed and they were alone, Adelaide said she had a request to make which she hoped would not be refused her: this was that her being in England might be kept secret, that therefore she might be called only by her christian name, and be suffered to retire when any visitors came to the house. With this Constance said she did not doubt her aunt would very readily comply, and she would mention it to her. At breakfast she performed her promise

mise, and it was agreed that Mademoiselle should be known by no other name than Adelaide.

She wrote that day to tell her mother where she was, and to offer, on condition she might remain unmolested on religious subjects, to return to her immediately: she shewed her letter to Mr. Stavenell, who having considered it, said he feared the sending it would be attended with danger:—What, said he, would you do, if instead of an answer to this letter, people should be sent to demand you, and take you home? we could not justify detaining you:—you had therefore better let me write to your friends, and that they may not know where to seek you, their answer shall be directed to me at the inn at Dover where you were, and I will write by the same post to Mrs. Belchier to desire it may be forwarded to me.—This scheme was adopted, and immediately put in execution.

Although Constance wished that Adelaide's mother might be disposed to receive her, she could not without regret think of losing the pleasure she had so newly found: every hour improved her opinion of the stranger, and discovered her to be well worth the attention and regard paid her: had her merit been less, pity would still have been interested for her; but now esteem and compassion were equally called on. She had suffered much from the bigotry of her mother and relations; she still suffered under a consciousness of having done wrong in leaving her family clandestinely: but neither of these causes of sorrow

forrow was to be put in comparison with the disappointment she had experienced : on this subject she, when alone with Constance, frequently conversed ; she communicated to her every circumstance of it, excepting the name of the aggressor, which from motives of still remaining affection she chose to conceal, and her narrative excited in her friends indignation at that, which, to say the least of it, was an act of wanton cruelty.

The attachment between the two ladies was so strong, that as the secrecy one desired made her studiously avoid company, the other would willingly have shared her solitude ; but this Constance could not always prevail on Adelaide to permit : from public amusements, and in a great measure from other engagements, she got excused ; but she could not avoid seeing those who came to the house, nor omit her visits to Lord Farnford's sisters. Mrs. Stavenell's inclinations now coincided with her wishes, she was so fond of Mademoiselle that she in every thing consulted her ease and gratification : lest she should be surprised by the sudden entrance of those whose intimacy would not allow of ceremony, she changed her sitting-room, and both she and her niece were always called out when visitors came : when she had company to dinner, a separate one was provided in another room for Adelaide, and she exerted herself so effectually, and imposed such silence on her servants, that her being there remained a profound secret.

Constance would, as she knew she might safely, have introduced Lady Maria Peryton to her; but the fear that if any degree of restraint were taken off Mrs. Stavenell, she would relax the whole, deterred her, and she was apprehensive lest any accident should excite suspicion in Lady Emma: for these reasons she gave up the additional pleasure which she might otherwise have derived from admitting Lady Maria.

Her time passed now very agreeably; Lord Farnford gave her no uneasiness; she saw his sisters frequently, but was not obliged to persevere in a round of dissipation: she found in Adelaide an amiable companion, and was unspeakably happy in seeing her endeavours to calm her anxiety, and reconcile her to her fate were not ineffectual: Mrs. Stavenell's frequent engagements, and the pleasure she took in the society of her new guest, saved her niece from much of her raillery, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity but satisfaction respecting the cause of Lord Reycoln's stay, which now and then gave her concern.

As soon as it could be expected an answer come to Mr. Stavenell's letter: the family were at dinner when it arrived: the blood forsook Adelaide's cheeks and she was in an universal tremor while Mr. Stavenell opened it: he glanced his eyes over it, and she being unable to suppress her anxiety till he spoke, said—Pray Sir, what—You shall know its contents, he replied, but you must first recollect yourself—it is

is not such an answer as you wished, but be assured that every thing that can soften its severity shall be done : if your friends desert you, strangers shall supply their place.—He then gave her the letter which contained but a few lines, and was written in French by Monsieur Bermond, her father-in-law, in it he said that Mademoiselle Rousson having without any provocation left her mother's house, she could on no terms be received there again, nor did she ever desire to see her if she continued as obstinate as she had hitherto been.

The cruelty of this, which was in effect a renunciation of her, Adelaide felt deeply ; but her kind friends said every thing that could comfort her : Mrs. Stavenell assured her that while she chose to continue in England, she should with her ever find a home ; and her son added that since her mother or her mother's relations saw no sin in abandoning her, he, who considered himself as her protector, and responsible for what befel her, should be very cautious, if at any time they relented, of suffering her to return to a place where she could expect so little kindness.

A little raised by these expressions of friendship, Mademoiselle endeavoured to check the torrent of tears so unexpected a repulse had occasioned : she received the consolation offered her with gratitude, and listened to the arguments Mr. Stavenell used to convince her that a greater misfortune than this

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might

might have befallen her, if her relations had, under pretended kindness, decoyed her home.

C H A P. XIII.

P E R P L E X I T Y.

MADEMOISELLE Rousson had now experienced the blessings of friendship and hospitality near a fortnight, in which time she had become possessed of the confidence of Miss Fitzarthur, and in return had imparted every particular of her misfortunes, excepting that which she begged permission to conceal, the name of him who had deserted her : whatever communications she made increased the affection of Constance, the prospect of whose marriage was rendered pleasing to her by the hope that she should enjoy Adelaide's society.

But Miss Fitzarthur began to grow really anxious for Lord Reycolm, and to fear that some accident, more dreadful than she had hitherto apprehended, had detained him : if it was such an one as prevented his writing, it ought reasonably to alarm her ; yet it was only to Mademoiselle Rousson that she dared express any uneasiness : had she ingenuously
told

told Mrs. Stavenell what she felt, she full well knew she should draw on herself, not only her railery, but the ridicule of many whom her aunt would studiously inform of this corroboration of her suspicions, which had always instructed her to believe her niece dissembled.

The suspense which Lord Reycolme's want of punctuality occasioned, and her fears for his safety were increased by Lord Drumferne's writing to Mrs. Stavenell to know whether she had heard of him, and expressing his wonder at his silence and his stay: anxiety was however in a few days lessened: but perplexity increased. Lord Farnford called one morning at Mrs. Stavenell's, and as soon as Miss Fitzarthur entered the room—What will you give me, Madam, said he, for the very best intelligence you can receive?—Have you it to sell? returned Constance.—Yes, he replied; when you hear it you will own I had:—Lord Reycolme is in town.—In town! she repeated, while the colour rose in her cheeks:—are you sure of it? Lord Farnford.—Nay, my dear Madam, said he, do not be so alarmed: I dare say you will see him soon:—why I have quite lighted up your countenance:—if I had known how *very* deeply you were interested, I would have been more cautious.—Poor thing, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, who was the only person beside Lord Farnford present with Constance, she has been very miserable a long while, but she would not own: she thought as every body was blind but herself.

herself.—I own, replied her niece, that I was at first surpris'd at what Lord Farnford said, and I dare say ma'm, if you had not heard it before, you were equally so.—O yes, my dear, said Mrs. Stavenell, I was vastly surpris'd:—did'nt I look very red and very pale ? Lord Farnford, just as she did.—Not quite in so great a degree, he replied laughing, but you must make allowances :—consider.—I do consider, resumed Mrs. Stavenell, and all I am angry at is she's so sly she won't own it.—What would you have me own ? replied Constance, heartily vexed at the folly and impertinence with which she was beset.—The truth, said her aunt, and not pretend as you don't care for Lord Reycoln.—I do not pretend, answered Constance, that I do not care for him ; but really you think I deceive you when I speak my real sentiments :—but pray, said she, addressing herself to Lord Farnford, when was he in town ?—You shall know, Madam, returned her informer, with an affected and ridiculous gravity ; as precisely as I can tell you.—It was not I, but a gentleman of my acquaintance, who met him, I believe, in Bond-street—no, let me be right, it was in Albemarle-street : upon my honour I cannot recollect at this instant which street it was in ; but I am rather inclined to think, from some circumstances, that it was Bond-street, I can inquire and let you know.—I will, if you please, get it in writing under the hand of the person who saw him.—I suppose, said Constance, to whom his wit was
not

not near so agreeable as to Mrs. Stavenell, your lordship chose to forget the question I asked was *when* Lord Reycoln was in town, not where he was met.—I beg your pardon, replied Lord Farnford:—indeed, Miss Fitzarthur, it is time Lord Reycoln should come, that we may see you smile again; but I will tell you as exactly as possible, at this distance of time, for I had my intelligence above an hour ago.—I believe, if my memory does not fail me, but I will not be responsible for the correctness of the account, that it must have been about forty-six minutes past three, *post meridian*, on Tuesday the eighth of the present month.—How much your lordship's wit had been obliged to you, answered Constance, with a smile of contempt, for sparing it so useless an exertion, had you only said on Tuesday! that would abundantly have satisfied me.—Indeed, interposed Mrs. Stavenell, my dear, I mustn't have you so cross:—suppose my Lord had a fancy to divert himself, pray where's the great harm of it? but as he says, we shall all be glad when Lord Reycoln comes.—Oh, said his lordship, Miss Fitzarthur must be excused,—you must not be so severe.—Come, Madam, I will take your part: let me be your advocate.—When I stand in need of such an one, said Constance, endeavouring to disguise her vexation, I will apply to your lordship, but may I beg leave to return to the employment I was called from?—How can you be so cruel, replied Lord Farnford, as to deprive us of the plea-

pleasure of your company ? Do you think I can stay after you are gone ?—Fie, my lord, Mrs. Stavenell interrupted : supposing she should tell her beau, he'll say, you've been a making love to his wife.—May I go ? pray madam, said Constance, to whom this was intolerable.—Aye, if you like it, replied her aunt.—She then making a slight courtesey to Lord Farnford, and desiring her compliments to his sisters, glad to get away at any rate, flew up stairs to Adelaide, to whom she related what had passed, and who, being acquainted with the obligation Constance was under, shared her surprise at hearing Lord Reycoln had been seen in town nearly a week before : she thought it probable that he might not know where to find Constance ; but this could not be, and she was soon convinced of it's impossibility.

A suspicion now arose in Miss Fitzarthur's mind that his inclinations were changed, and that therefore he avoided her : to this, were it so, she could have submitted, but that which gave her the most uneasiness was the fear lest he or his friends should think the promise so binding as not to admit of an excuse for its non-performance. She now wished she had asked Lord Farnford whether any reason had been given by Lord Reycoln for his being in England without the knowledge of his Father : but her disgust at the folly she had just been witness to was so great, that she could not think of returning to the parlour, where he still was, to procure any information :

information : she had, nothing therefore left to do but to wait the event patiently.

Before dinner she saw Mr. Stavenell alone, told him what Lord Farnford had said, and asked his opinion of the aspect which Lord Reycoln's being privately in town wore.—I am inclined to think, Mr. Stavenell replied, that either it is a mistake, or that Farnford had a mind to try you : but if he is in town depend on it you will shortly hear of him.

This prediction was soon fulfilled, for about a quarter of an hour before dinner time Lord Reycoln stopped at the door. No entreaties could prevail on Adelaide to stay ; she made it an invariable rule to retire when any one came, and she adhered to it now : Mr. Stavenell, who was with his mother and Constance, went down to receive him. The carriage and horses appearing to be just come off a journey, Constance immediately concluded that Lord Farnford's account was not true, and prepared herself, not without some little perturbation, to see him who was to be the future partner of her life. Mrs. Stavenell diverted herself with fancying her niece infinitely more agitated than she really was, and her raillery ceased not till Lord Reycoln entered the room ; he took her hand without speaking, then quitted her, and addressed himself to Mrs. Stavenell, and returning to Constance, said—I am so ashamed of having been absent for so long a time after I had given you

reason to expect me, that I would not increase my fault by deferring the pleasure of seeing you five minutes longer, otherwise you should have been apprised of my coming: I fear you must have thought me very remiss: do you forgive me?—Lord Drumferne, replied Constance, knows, I hope, of your being in England, he has written to my aunt.—I wrote to him, said Lord Reycolme, and he knows by this time that I am come: I shall stay but a few days in London, and then go down to him.—Well, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, I'm glad my lord, you're come, for my niece, in spite of all she can say, I'm sure she's been excessive uneasy, and so cross! she woudn't let us speak to her.

To disengage her from the pain of being obliged to listen to that which was obviously very disagreeable to her, Mr Stavenell drew Constance to a little distance, and said—Lord Farnford was either deceived himself, or he meant to laugh at you, for Lord Reycolme says he left Dover but this morning: I asked him without repeating what I had heard, when he landed; he told me last night, and that he set out early this morning for town, so that you have nothing to apprehend: I know what your fears were, and should have been very much hurt had any thing in his conduct given reason to suspect he slighted you.

The suspicion of Lord Reycolme's having been privately in town was removed from Constance's mind,

mind, but that he did not meet her with any extraordinary degree of pleasure was evident: she, however forbore saying so to Mr. Stavenell, lest it might seem to arise from a consciousness of self importance, or from disappointed vanity. A few minutes conversation confirmed her in the opinion that Lord Reycoln's mind was not perfectly at ease: there was a restraint in his behaviour, a want of cordiality in his expressions of joy at returning to his native country, that indicated more than appeared: he seemed scarcely able to recollect himself, and his answers were often contradictory and perplexed. His looks too tended to strengthen this presumption; he was much fallen away and appeared dejected: this Mrs. Stavenell remarked to him, and he accounted for it by saying—that since he wrote to Miss Fitzarthur, he had fallen from his horse, and had been so much hurt as to make it doubtful whether he should ever recover.

After a stay of about *twenty minutes*, to the astonishment of all, he rose to take his leave; he was urged to stay dinner, but was not to be prevailed on: he said he proposed going down to his father's the next day, and when he returned would wait on Mrs. Stavenell. Before he quitted the room a servant came to summon the family to dinner, but even this did not alter his purpose: though he had dismissed his carriage and servants, as if he had at first intended staying, and it rained very fast, he set out on foot, and left Mrs. Stavenell

nell, her niece, and her son, wholly at a loss to account for his conduct.

Had he accepted Mrs. Stavenell's invitation, Adelaide would have dined alone; but now Constance went to her to fetch her.—Come mademoiselle, said she, come to dinner, my lord is gone.—Gone returned Adelaide, is it possible?—It is indeed, Constance answered; he was pressed to stay, but would not. I am afraid there is something concealed, but I must think of it: come, my aunt waits for us. They then went down together, but Miss Fitzarthur's appetite was entirely lost; she was surprised and hurt at what she had seen, and fearful lest Mrs. Stavenell should begin to comment on it before the servants quitted the room: to avert this she endeavoured to start other topics, but no one seemed inclined to conversation, nor could she support it. At last they were left to themselves, and Mrs. Stavenell, who had with an extraordinary degree of prudence remained silent, now began to express her astonishment, by violent exclamations, at Lord Reycolme's rudeness in going away just as dinner was sent up: if this was French manners, God keep her, she said, from them; for she never saw any thing so abominable.—I do not think, replied her son, that it was so rude as odd; it is not his breach of civility towards us, but the apparent slight of Miss Fitzarthur that startles me: we ought not, however, to condemn unheard, he may be able to account for it; and indeed great allowances should

should be made, for he seems very far from well; let us draw no conclusions till we have seen him again; he might be under a necessity of keeping some appointment, and might have only a few minutes to spare, if so, his coming here is an argument in his favor.—Don't talk of arguments, said Mrs. Stavenell, I can see with half an eye whether a man behaves as he should do; would any body believe as Lord Reycoln had been away above three years, and my niece was to be the woman he was to be married to, to see him come in, just as if we had been all people he never saw before? and then when he was sat down, and began to talk, did ever any body see any thing like him? I vow he seemed to me as if he could not say yea or nay.—He appeared to be ill, answered Mr. Stavenell, you heard him say he had had a fall from his horse; you must not bear too hard; want of health will excuse many things.—Aye indeed it may, returned Mrs. Stavenell, who seemed seriously to resent his behaviour, and in whose opinion Constance could not but concur; but it will never excuse this, nor you shan't persuade me that because perhaps he had the head-ach, he cou'dn't say—I'm glad to see ye.—I admit what you say, Mr. Stavenell replied, but let me beg of you not to draw conclusions till you have seen him again.—You may do as you please for that said his mother, but thoughts are free, and I shall do as I like about it.—What do you say to it, Miss Fitzarthur?—I am inclined, said

said Constance, to follow Mr. Stavenell's example, and suspend my judgement till I see farther : Lord Reycoln can most probably give a very satisfactory reason for what surprises us, and, if it is not the result of any offence. I have given him, I shall rest satisfied.

Mrs. Stavenell was not at all disposed to submit to this suspension of her judgment, she still persisted in exclaiming at Lord Reycoln's rudeness, and seemed not a little vexed that neither her son or niece joined her ; the resentment of the latter she did all in her power to excite, representing his behaviour as designedly affronting, calling to her remembrance his want of punctuality in the time of his return, and exaggerating every circumstance. Constance heard her without interruption, and when she ceased, wishing to get rid of the conversation, she said, that were it only from Lord Reycoln's visit that she were to judge, she should imagine his coolness the consequence of a change of sentiments, but that as he had deferred his journey till so long after the time he named for it, she supposed affairs of importance had detained him, and might still occupy his mind ; but that whether this, or illness, or any other reason were to be assigned for it, the acquiescing in Mr. Stavenell's charitable determination not to condemn unheard could be productive of no bad consequences, and was justice, to which not only Lord Reycoln but all the world was entitled.—I have heard say, replied

plied Mrs. Stavenell to her niece, that they that will bear ill usage, deserves to be ill used ; and if you like such behaviour well and good ; but I know that if I was as you I would never see Lord Reycolm again.—O madam, madam, said her son, you must not talk so : I hope my cousin will see him, and suffer him to account for these unfavourable appearances.—I will give him credit for behaving to her, and to every body with honour : do not be too harsh. Notwithstanding all that was said ; Mrs. Stavenell would not give up. Adelaide who had borne no part in the conversation now quitted the room, and Constance presently after followed her.

Though her temper was naturally mild, she was not without passions ; and she could not but be offended at the coldness and extreme indifference which Lord Reycolm had manifested : what Mrs. Stavenell had said she owned to Adelaide had more reason with it than she dared while with her to allow : ill health might have excused him from seeing her, but surely if he was able to express any sentiments, those of joy on his return, if he had felt it, were as easily expressed, and as natural as any other : that he had not determined when he came, to make so short a visit, she was convinced from his sending away his carriage ; and she began to question herself whether it might not be something in her reception of him that had disgusted him ; but after much thinking on the subject

ject she returned to her first resolution to suspend her judgment: she was not desirous to conceal from Adelaide how much she was interested and agitated: her friend sympathized with her, and approved her determination to release Lord Reycoln from his promise, if on another interview she had reason to suspect an alienation of his affections.

Mrs. Stavenell had a large card-party in the evening, at which Constance was obliged to be present: that she was not in spirits was immediately discovered, but as neither Lord Farnford nor his sisters were there, she escaped with a small portion of raillery. The company staid late, and she retired to her chamber mentally and corporally fatigued; yet she did not close her eyes during the whole of the night: what had passed in the day so fully engrossed her thoughts that all inclination to sleep was totally banished: she foresaw much uneasiness in store for her, for though she would draw no conclusion from Lord Reycoln's behaviour, she had but too much cause to imagine that had he been left to follow his own inclination, he would have forborne his visit, that in so long an absence his attachment to her had relaxed, was not she thought criminal; but what was to become of her if her father should oblige him to the performance of his engagement? she knew that Sir Edward was very anxious for the match, he had frequently said, the whole happiness of his life and of her's depended on it, and she feared a disappointment.

ment would be an insupportable affliction to him. After having ruminated some time on this, she blamed herself for so precipitately supposing a wish to be exonerated from his promise was the reason of Lord Reycoln's coolness; it might be accidental, it might be unintentional; perhaps his sudden return might have overpowered his faculties, or some unfortunate accident might have dejected him: all these allowances and suppositions she candidly made for him, but with a strengthening resolution never to be his wife if she had just cause to believe he wished his engagement annulled.

CHAP. XIV.

INDIFFERENCE.

AS soon as Constance rose in the morning Adelaide came to her.—I am sure, said she, you have enjoyed your own thoughts long enough; it is not right to sit alone when we are low spirited; you know you tell me so—come, let me return some part of your kindness, and endeavour to raise your spirits.—I am not in low spirits, answered Constance: I believe I should find, were I to make an impartial inquiry, that it is my pride that is wounded. I foolishly imagined that seeing me
would

would have a wonderful effect on Lord Reycolme: and my vanity is no more than properly mortified. If I could be so silly as to suppose that in so long an absence, employed in travelling, to see whatever was most worthy observation, he could meet nothing that would more engage his attention than myself, I deserve whatever I suffer: but who can say what the cause of his dejection is? he may perhaps, in quitting the continent, have parted from some valued friend, some close connection may have been broken, and it is impossible while such a wound remains unhealed, either to receive or express pleasure.—It may be so, said Adelaide, and you are very good to suppose it may: if friendship is the tie broken he will soon recover it by seeing you; and even if it is some closer attachment, his strayed heart may return to you.—Indeed, replied Constance, if I discover that any such attachment is the cause of it, his strayed heart never shall return to me; not that I should be gratified by resenting his little command over himself, but because I would not for the world be the occasion of his unhappiness; and who knows but he may have sacrificed a much more ardent passion than he ever felt or professed for me, to his sense of honor and obligation?—who knows but at this moment some deserving woman may be lamenting his prior engagement, and in the agony of disappointed affection, wishing I had never existed?—It is possible that Lord Reycolme himself
may

may be a fitter object of pity than resentment, and I assure you I am sincere when I say that, supposing this the case, I should have inexpressible pleasure in making such a renunciation as would leave him at liberty : the worst I fear is, by avowing this disposition to encourage Lord Farnford, and that Lord Reycoln's departure from his intentions should offend my father.

Her appearance sufficiently declared how ill she had rested ; Mrs. Stavenell, when they met at breakfast, noticed it, and attributing it to it's true cause, encouraged her resentment. Lord Calorne called in at noon, and Constance sat in fear lest Lord Reycoln's conduct should be submitted to his judgment ; but her aunt had enlarged her stock of prudence on the occasion, saying nothing more than that he was come. As soon as he was gone she went out, and returned no more till dinner time : a commission of compliments from Lord Farnford's family informed Constance to what quarter her visit had been, and she did not doubt that the subject uppermost in her mind had been fully discussed : this did not please her, as she feared it might give Lord Farnford new hopes, and take off from the restraint with which he had lately behaved to her.

In the evening Mrs. Stavenell was engaged from home ; and her son, her niece, and Adelaide, remained together ; their conversation turned on that subject which had for the last twenty-four hours

hours occupied their attention, but Constance, desiring, lest she should pass such a night as the last, that some other topic might be introduced, Lord Reycoln was no more mentioned. About nine o'clock Mr. Stavenell was going out, when a message came from Lord Reycoln to Mrs. Stavenell and Miss Fitzarthur, signifying that he would dine with them the next day : what answer it were best to return, Constance could not at the moment determine : she applied to Mr. Stavenell, who willing to assist her, sent the servant out of the room, and asked her what she would say.—I do not know, she replied ; I cannot decline it, because we have no dinner engagement, and yet I will not say, *I shall be glad to see him.*—Give me a card, said Mr. Stavenell, I will contrive for you. He then wrote :

‘ Mrs. Stavenell being from home, Mr. Stavenell takes upon him to answer for her and Miss Fitzarthur, that they will expect the honor of Lord Reycoln’s company to dinner to-morrow.’

Thus was Constance effectually and adroitly extricated from her difficulty, and she hoped this promised interview would enable her to form a decisive opinion ; yet she could not forbear observing the inconsistency of Lord Reycoln’s words and actions : when he went away the day before, he had said he should go the next day to his father’s, and he not only was still in town, but had engaged himself to be so on the day following.

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In the morning she called on Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton: she found the former alone, and that she had heard of Lord Reycoln's arrival: her inclination was strong to communicate to her what was passed, and what suspicions it had excited in her mind, as what Lady Maria thought of it would in a great measure have guided her own opinion; but considering that this might prejudice her, perhaps unjustly, against Lord Reycoln, she forbore mentioning it. Soon after, Lord Farnford and Lady Emma came in.—So, said his lordship, I give you joy, Miss Fitzarthur; I hear Lord Reycoln is come at last—pray what apology does he make?—One that is too good, answered Constance, he has been thrown from his horse, and has been very ill in consequence of it.—And what does he say, for being so long in town without paying his devoirs to you, he asked.—I do not find, said Constance, that he was in town: he had landed but the night before we saw him.—Oh, there you are deceived, replied Lord Farnford, I will swear he was in town when I told you so; not that I saw him, but I had it from one who spoke to him.—There is some mistake in it, she answered, I know not how to account for it; perhaps I may learn to day, for Lord Reycoln dines with us. You are very incredulous, said Lord Farnford: How happy it is for us when others are prepossessed in our favor! Lord Reycoln is a happy man; I dare say his joy at seeing you was excessive: after
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so long an absence, so many thousand fears as he must have had while at a distance from you, to meet you was a greater than mortal felicity—and to meet you so disposed towards him—no illiberal prejudices to combat—no slights—no contempt, no neglect! It was more happiness than he deserved, who could so philosophically wait its completion, as to be in another kingdom three years.

I dare say, said Lady Emma, by her opportune interposition, very much relieving Constance, Lord Reycoln was overjoyed to a degree: could he speak when he saw you?—He appeared to be very ill, replied Constance.—Ill? interrupted Lord Farnford—Good God! could any man in such a situation think of illness: he must have no soul who could remember even the acutest pain at such a time.—Your lordship, Miss Fitzarthur answered, is rather too sublime in your notions; certainly pain will at all times be attended to; and I cannot think the sight of me could be a subject of such joy as to exclude its remembrance.—My brother said Lady Maria always talks in the superlative: he thinks those who can bear joy and retain their senses hardly worthy of it.

The arrival of visitors gave Constance an opportunity of taking her leave, not being able to determine whether Lord Farnford and his sisters did or did not know the circumstances of Lord Reycoln's visit. On returning home she found Mr. Stave-
nell alone in the parlour, and he detained her a few
minutes

minutes to tell her that, as his mother would be out in the evening, he hoped nothing would prevent Lord Reycoln giving her a satisfactory reason for the awkwardness of his behaviour: Constance knew to whom she was obliged for this attention, as her aunt had intended spending the evening at home, and asked Mr. Stavenell if *he* should be out.—I will do, said he, what is most agreeable to you. Then, replied Constance, if you could conveniently be present, I should be obliged to you.—He promised to do so, and she, quitting him, went to Adelaide.

She had scarcely sat down when Mr. Stavenell came into the room, and calling her into that adjoining, he said:—I am sorry to be the bearer of unwelcome news; but some one must tell you.—Reycoln has just sent a verbal apology for not dining here, he says he is indisposed, but he will to-morrow take the chance of finding you at home in the evening.—Mercy on me! answered Constance, does he mean to affront Mrs. Stavenell? this is really unpardonable.—It is unaccountable, said Mr. Stavenell: I begin to fear he has not the perfect use of his intellects.—What answer did you send, said she.—None, he replied, the servant did not stay for any.—Surely, returned Constance, he was very indifferent how his message was received; but if he comes to-morrow I will not see him.—I think you are right said Mr. Stavenell, your resentment is not only justifiable but necessary; if he

is offended at your not seeing him he will not call again ; and, if he really wishes to see you, he will be very anxious to clear himself of the suspicion of neglect.—And now, said she, will you tell me what I had best do ? Shall I write to my father and inform him of Lord Reycoln's strange coldness, or shall I wait and see farther ? I wrote to my mother and told her he was come and appeared in ill health.—I would stay, Mr. Stavenell answered, till I had learn't a little more ; perhaps when he finds you will not see him, he may assign some cause as an excuse for his neglect. This advise she approved, and promised to follow : and then as Mrs. Stavenell was from home, went to communicate this new disappointment to Mademoiselle Rousson.

It was evident that Lord Reycoln's behaviour, however Mrs. Stavenell exclaimed against it, was not a subject of *vexation* to her : when her niece told her of the message she had sent, it could not be doubted that she hoped all he lost of her favour, Lord Farnford would gain : Constance was therefore obliged to conceal her resentment, and to make for him apologies which she believed foundationless.—Aye, see there, said her aunt, they say it's better for some folks to steal a horse than for some others to look over a hedge ; if Lord Farnford had done half as much, you'd have been in a mighty passion ; but Lord Reycoln's a favourite, you'll

you'll bear any thing from him ; and upon my life I believe he'll try your patience if he has you.

Just after breakfast the next morning Lord Reycoln called. Constance's surprise was so great, not expecting him till the evening, that when he was announced she remained silent.—Oh pray, said Mrs. Stavenell, let him be shewn into the parlour : and now my dear you'll go and hear what fine speeches he can make.—You will come with me, madam, will you not ? said Constance.—Not I indeed, replied she, Mademoiselle and I'll stay here.—Pray do not make me go by myself, said her niece, how odd it will appear.—Not at all, Mrs. Stavenell answered, you'll not want company.—To this irksome necessity Constance was forced to submit, Mr. Stavenell was out, and Adelaide had uniformly declined seeing every body : she therefore went down with an apology for Mrs. Stavenell's not appearing.—My visit is to Miss Fitz-arthur, Lord Reycoln replied, I come to beg her pardon for my yesterday's fault ; had I known sooner that my business would have called me into the city at the time when I should have been here, I would have sent earlier.—Constance said nothing : the excuse sent was indisposition, now it was business in the city : Lord Reycoln was completely inconsistent.

They sat down, a pause ensued ; it was an awkward silence, but Constance was determined not to interrupt it : in a few minutes he asked her

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when she heard from Marstonbury.—she answered, the week before last.—Sir Edward and Lady Barbara are well, I hope, said his lordship.—They are very well, she replied.—Do they know I am come? said he: I wrote to my father, perhaps they may have heard that way.—In my last letter, Constance answered, I told my mother of your lordship's arrival, and, added she, provoked at his insipidity, in my next I shall tell her that, for what cause I know not, you seem sorry you are returned.—Why should you think so? you do me injustice indeed, Miss Fitzarthur, replied Lord Reycoln, coldly.—Because, said she, I have every reason to believe it.—You are mistaken, he answered; I rejoice in my return, and do most ardently wish I had never quitted England: you are offended at my remissness; I own I have not done as I ought; you must forgive it; I have not the use of my senses.—I am not offended, said Constance, but I am certain that your return affords you no pleasure.—Nothing can, he replied; if I could be pleased, it would be with seeing you: how long do you stay in town?—It is uncertain, she answered: I came to spend the winter with my aunt; but, said she, not to depart from our subject, tell me, my lord, whether meeting me does not make you uneasy, and whether you do not wish all engagements between us cancelled; if you do, it is cruelty not to own it: consider, it is deceiving me, and why should you? I could not for the world

word make you or any body unhappy.—Do not talk so, he replied, you are too good, my intentions are the same as when I quitted you at Marstonbury, and I hope in a little time to convince you—but said he, hesitating, I have a weight on my spirits, and have had ever since my fall: I shall now, I hope, recover it, and shall then appear what I ought to be. I fear I detain you from Mrs. Stavenell, I will take another opportunity of calling; I must go down to my father's for about ten days, and as soon as I return, it shall be my first business to see you. With these words he rose, bowed, and retired, leaving Constance more embarrassed than before. What he meant by wishing he had never left England, she could not divine; but she really believed his fall had hurt his intellects, and of this he himself seemed sensible: she now pitied him, and returning to Mrs. Stavenell, told her how far his inconsistencies were resolvable into the consequences of this accident: she heard her, commended her charity, but concluded with saying, she did not believe a word on't.

C H A P. XV.

O B S T I N A C Y.

THE gloom which these untoward circumstances had diffused over the mind of Miss Fitzarthur, and by consequence over that of her sympathetic friend, was in some measure dispelled by an event as unexpected and more pleasing. As Mrs. Stavenell, her son, her niece, and Adelaide were sitting down to dinner, a letter was brought to Mr. Stavenell: he opened it, and found another enclosed, and opening that, a third: he rose from table, and retiring to the farther end of the room, read two of them, and put them altogether into his pocket, saying nothing: his mother's curiosity was awakened, she asked whom they came from, and he answered her by saying, she should know after dinner. As soon as the servants were dismissed, he asked Adelaide if she had any relations in Bourdeaux.—Yes, said she, my father had a cousin there: why do you ask? is that letter about me? —Is he a Protestant? returned Mr. Stavenell.—O yes, Adelaide replied, he is my own father's relation, but there never was much intercourse between our families.—Well then, said Mr. Stavenell, this letter is from that gentleman: he has heard that you have left France, and that I have
written

written to your mother, and he desires me to forward the enclosed to you : the paquet was directed to the inn at Dover, and Mrs. Belchier has sent it to me. He then gave the letters to her, she read them, tears of joy starting in her eyes, and gave them to Constance, while Mr. Stavenell communicated the contents verbally to his mother. That from her relation to Mr. Stavenell, contained expressions of gratitude to him for the protection he had afforded to Mademoiselle Rousson, of strong interest for her, and a wish that she would, either by returning to some of her friends, or by empowering them to act for her, prevent the injury which her fortune would sustain by her absence.—That to Adelaide was dictated by the most cordial friendship ; he urged her to come to him, pledging his honour that no harm should ensue to her, approving what she had done, and promising her an asylum in his house, as long as she should chuse to continue there.

A shower of tears relieved the agitation of her mind, she was ready to accede to the proposition of returning to her relations, and was highly sensible of this unexpected instance of friendship. She wrote the same evening to Bourdeaux, professing her willingness to accept the invitation, and would have named the earliest possible time for setting out, if Mr. Stavenell had not prevented her by insisting on her staying in England long enough to see a little of the metropolis : hitherto

said he, you have been immured. As concealment will be no longer necessary, I beg you will not engage to go in less than a fortnight, and on that condition I will myself accompany you in your journey.

To this request, in which Mrs. Stavenell and her niece joined, Adelaide not reluctantly yielded ; and she was now to begin a new kind of life. The prohibition to mention her was taken off the servants ; and Constance, whose regret at the idea of parting from her friend was overbalanced by the prospect of her restoration to some degree of peace, promised herself the next day the pleasure of introducing her to Lady Maria Peryton, who she knew would be glad to be acquainted with her. That she might not embarrass or distress her by relating the circumstances of her story when she was present, she went the next morning alone to Lord Farnford's, for the purpose of seeing Lady Maria, and inviting her to meet Adelaide in the evening. She found Lord Farnford, his sisters, and Lord Calorne at breakfast : expressions of welcome, inquiries, and reproaches for never coming, being over, she asked Lady Maria if she and Lady Emma would drink tea at Mrs. Stavenell's—We were just going to send, said Lady Maria, ; my brother proposed it, and Lord Calorne has promised to meet us. This point settled, Constance told them whom she wished to introduce, and as much of Adelaide's story as she thought it necessary

necessary they should know, reserving particulars for a tête à tête with Lady Maria.

In the evening the party met, and Mademoiselle Rousson made her appearance: that she caught Lord Farnford's notice was, immediately on his seeing her, perceptible: Lady Maria received her with complacent benevolence; Lady Emma with sprightly joy; and Lord Calorne with polite attention. Constance was now in her own opinion at the summit of felicity; the present pleasure excluded every anxious remembrance, she saw all around her happy, and her drooping friend's spirits raised to cheerfulness.

It was proposed that during the remainder of Adelaide's stay in London, she should be occasionally at the public amusements; a party for the play the next evening was therefore agreed on; Mrs. and Mr. Stavenell were otherwise engaged, but wishing this might not influence the rest, he asked Lord Calorne to go in his place.—I am very sorry I cannot, said Lord Calorne, I am obliged to dine at my father's; it will be late before I get away, but I shall drop in before the entertainment is over, to convey some ladies out of the house. It was then settled that Lord Farnford's family should, in their way, call at Mrs. Stavenell's and take Constance and Mademoiselle Rousson.

The next morning Adelaide went out with Mrs. Stavenell and her niece, for the first time since she

had entered the house : they returned home just time enough to dress, and at the appointed hour Lady Maria and Lady Emma came, without their brother : on inquiry it appeared that he had dined at the Thatched house, and that his sisters had called for him, but could not disengage him from his company. Constance did not like going without a gentleman ; but Lady Emma's assurances that, as their servant was at the house, there was nothing in it, reconciled her to the necessity, and, as Lord Farnford promised to be with them by eight o'clock, she had no fears about coming away. They went, got in very well, and were much please with their amusement ; but eight o'clock arriving without Lord Farnford, Constance began to grow a little uneasy, for the house was uncommonly crowded : about nine his lordship entered the box, so intoxicated that she would gladly have dispensed with the performance of his promise, and run all risque of getting away without him : she however said not a word ; Lady Maria shook her head, and said—I was afraid it would be so.—Lady Emma laughed, and Adelaide's attention was wholly engrossed by the alteration of Miss Fitz-arthur's countenance, next to whom Lord Farnford seated himself. To attend to the performance was now impossible ; he was so vociferous nothing but his voice could be heard, and he seemed scarcely aware that he had quitted his noisy companions : this might have been borne, had his behaviour

behaviour to Constance been confined within the bounds of propriety ; but his excess inclined him to be equally quarrelsome and amorous ; a request to him to be less loud was resented, and a patient toleration of his impertinence proved an encouragement to his gallantry. Lady Maria seeing how disagreeable her brother's vicinity to Miss Fitzarthur was to her, offered to change places with her, this he opposed with all possible vehemence, she was therefore obliged to remain in her uncomfortable situation, conscious that the eyes of every one on the other side of the house was directed to her, whom Lord Farnford's ridiculous behaviour had made conspicuous ; when she heard a gentleman, who had a few minutes before gone out, and now returned into the next box, say to some ladies there—'Tis very true, therefore I would advise you to go as soon as the play is over.—I think, answered one of the ladies, we had better go now ; for all who do not chuse to sit it will be going out as fast as possible after the play, and perhaps we may not be able to get to the carriage.—On this they rose to go, when Lady Maria, who sat next them, alarmed at what she had heard, desired to know what they apprehended.—A riot, madam, the gentleman replied: a violent opposition to the farce is expected. Constance's terror at this information was excessive : Lady Maria endeavoured to make Lord Farnford sensible of their danger, but ineffectually ;

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effectually ; he said he was just in a humour for a riot, and would not stir.

The gentleman to whom Lady Maria had spoken, now seeing how unable Lord Farnford was to protect his company, offered to attend them to their carriage ; but Lady Maria had unfortunately sent it away, and it was not ordered till eleven : she, however, recollected, that so utterly incapable as her brother was of any degree of care, the chances were in favour of his having neglected to dismiss his chariot, she therefore begged the gentleman to order Lord Farnford's servants to be called, and sent to them : he promised to obey her directions and went away. Lady Emma, who was the only one of the ladies not terrified, assured them there was nothing they need fear ; for the riot would very probably be confined to the galleries, and, if they would sit still, nothing but the noise would disturb them ; but this could not satisfy her less heroic companions. Lord Farnford now jumped up, and said he would go into the pit, for if he staid there he should see nothing. Constance was half dead with terror ; Adelaide's fears were not so great, because she was not perfectly aware of the danger ; she was encouraged by Lady Emma's confidence, and all her concern was for Miss Fitz-arthur : Lady Maria, though very much frightened, exerted all her presence of mind to supply her brother's inability ; she so far prevailed with him

him that he sat down, and all they could hope from him was his remaining passive.

The last act of the play was now very nearly concluded, the servants did not come, and many people were going out, when Lady Maria saw Lord Calorne enter the opposite box hastily, she would have given any thing for a possibility of informing him of their situation, but she could not catch his eye, and the noise was already too great to make him hear her : he did not stay two minutes, but went out with his party.

The curtain dropped, and the uproar grew dreadful, but neither the terror of Constance, nor the entreaties of Lady Maria could move Lord Farnford : their fears were at the highest when the box door opened, and Lord Calorne came in ; the ladies he had been with having seen the distress of Lady Maria, and Lord Farnford's utter inability to protect them.—How can you be so mad, Lord Farnford, said he, as to stay here ?—they say the house will be pulled to pieces—do quit it while you can, for the croud increases very fast.—Let it, replied his philosophical lordship, I shall not stir : what is there for me to be afraid of ? I shall stay and see it out.—If you are so obstinate, said Lord Calorne, you must abide the consequences ; but these ladies shall go with me.—No, they shall stay here, Lord Farnford answered.—You cannot be so absurd, said Lord Calorne, as to risque staying here during the riot ; if they are not exposed to personal danger, they will be to insult.—I do

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not care, was all the answer Lord Farnford would give.

The clamor by this time became outrageous ; the lights were thrown down, and all was tumult, noise, and confusion : every body had quitted the boxes ; and Lord Calorne warmly insisted on conducting Lord Farnford's party through the croud ; but in proportion as one was urgent the other was obstinate, and Lord Calorne, endeavouring to get between Lord Farnford and the the ladies that he might not prevent their going, this valiant disciple of Bacchus laid his hand on his sword, swore he would not be insulted by any man living, and stammered out that he would have satisfaction.— What you please when you are sober, replied Lord Calorne ; but I am not quite so mad as to endanger the safety of those you ought to protect for the pleasure of bringing you to your senses.— He then, laying hold with one hand of the hilt of Lord Farnford's sword, to prevent his drawing it, gave the other to Lady Maria, but she, kindly apprehensive for Constance, begged him to take her first, and then Adelaide ; he did so, and they got on the outside of the box door : he returned for Lady Maria and Lady Emma, but their brother, provoked at his firmness, had reeled to the door to stop them, and there, being too drunk to stand without support, he fell down, making those within prisoners. Lord Calorne immediately jumped over into the next box, and found Constance

stance and Mademoiselle Rousson in the lobby, environed with the crowd: their situation was now more dangerous than before, therefore, telling Lady Maria he would return in a few minutes, he forced a passage through the mob, and having put them into his carriage he detained one of the footmen, whom he ordered to get two chairs immediately, and then returned to the relief of Lord Farnford's sisters. Miss Fitzarthur and Mademoiselle Rousson were now perfectly safe, they soon got away from the mob, and reached home without any additional misfortune.

The carriage was to go back for Lord Calorne, and with it Mrs. Stavenell sent a servant to learn the fate of Lady Maria and her sister: their apprehensions were soon relieved by hearing that the rioters, after destroying the ornaments of the house, on an apology from the stage, had desisted from farther violence, and that Lord Farnford and the ladies had quitted the house.

C H A P. XVI.

J U S T I F I C A T I O N.

EARLY next morning Mrs. Stavenell dispatched a messenger to inquire after the family in Portman-square, before whose return Lord Calorne

lorne came to make similar inquiries respecting Miss Fitzarthur and her friend?—How did Lord Farnford's sisters get home? was Constance's first question.—I am just come from their house, he replied, but neither of them were stirring: I learnt however that they got home very well: fortunately when their carriage went for them their servants made their way in, or else they must have remained where they were, for Lord Farnford lay, where we left him till he was carried off.—But did you not find them when you returned? said Constance.—No, said he, it was impossible to get near them: I was forced to go round and across the stage, and by that time they were gone.

Mrs. Stavenell by leaving the room gave her niece an opportunity she much wished for, of asking Lord Calorne if he had seen Lord Reycolme, as by that she hoped to find out whether he had observed any alteration in him.—I have seen him but once, he replied, and that was accidental: we met in the street, and to my very great astonishment he seemed scarcely to know me.—He appears to me, said Constance, to be in a very ill state of health: he looks sadly; I never saw such a change.—I believe, his lordship answered, that it is an observation all of his acquaintance, who have seen him since his return, have made. I own I was very much concerned, when, meeting him in the street, and stopping him, for he would have passed me without seeing me, he returned all my expressions of joy

joy and congratulation with such coldness and indifference as would almost have inclined me to believe I had by mistake addressed a stranger.—Constance did not dare to be equally explicit: something within restrained her; and she only repeated that he appeared to be very ill.

Just as Lord Calorne, after an hour and a half's gossip, was going, Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton were announced: he staid to see them, and to know what passed after he left them. Lady Maria, as she entered the room, seeing him near the door, said.—I ought always to rejoice in meeting your lordship, for I do not know what I should have done without the seasonable relief you afforded us last night: I am sure my brother must make an apology for the trouble we gave you.—His apology replied Lord Calorne, laughing, must be a challenge, you know he threatened me fiercely last night.—Yes, said Lady Maria, he spoke brave words, but I assure you he is very penitent this morning: I saw him just before we came out, and he is extremely angry at himself; and very sensible of your kindness: he talked of calling on you to-day to make his acknowledgments.

On the countenance of Lady Emma displeasure was strongly imprinted, though when she approached Constance, she endeavoured to disguise it with a smile: she passed Lord Calorne in silence, and without looking at him, and then tittuping to Miss Fitzarthur

Fitzarthur, in a tone of affected gaiety :—Well my dear, said she, how did you get home last night ? Lord Calorne was so good as to see you safe home I hope : I am very glad you did not stay with us, for you'd have been monstrously frightened ; frightened to a degree.—Constance thanked her for her concern, and was going to answer her question, when her ladyship turning away to Adelaide said—I hope Mademoiselle Rousson was not frightened : I assure you ma'am, after you left us it was dreadful—such screaming, and shrieking, and such a piece of work ! I really began to think I must go into hysterics. Lady Emma's animated description of her terror might have proceeded, had she not overheard Lord Calorne apologising to her sister for not having performed his promise of returning to her : with a studied air of stiff reserve she looked at him, and said—Your lordship need not trouble yourself to make excuses, we know why you didn't return : it was much better you should go home with Miss Fitzarthur than come back for us : you guessed our carriage was ordered about eleven, and if the servants did not find us in one part of the house they might in another ; it was their fault if they didn't.

What you have said, madam, Lord Calorne answered, convinces me of the necessity of my excusing to Lady Maria the breach of my promise. I did not come home with Miss Fitzarthur, nor did I at all rely on your servants' finding you.

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I put Miss Fitzarthur and Mademoiselle Rousson into the carriage, and endeavoured to make my way back, but it was impossible; the croud was coming towards me, and I saw to wait their being cleared would occasion such a delay as would render any attempt for you useless: finding, therefore, that to regain any of the fitting part of the house would be impracticable, I went round to one of the back doors, and with difficulty prevailed to be permitted to cross the stage, hoping I might be able to get from thence to your box; but, as near an hour had been spent in these endeavours, you were gone, and I heard had got very well to your coach.—It is mighty well, Lady Emma replied; we did get away, and that was all we wanted; I only wished that we might all have gone together, as we might have done very easily.—Indeed you are mistaken, sister, said Lady Maria, vexed at Lady Emma's groundless resentment:—what was to become of Miss Fitzarthur and Mademoiselle Rousson while Lord Calorne had got us out of the box?—You know my brother would not let us go; and to have clambered, as we must have done, would have taken so much time as might have separated us from Miss Fitzarthur, without our being able afterwards to find her; for the lobby was quite full, and all the people driving one way:—do not be angry about it: rather rejoice that we met with no accident.—I am not angry, replied Lady Emma; the tears starting in her eyes.

Happily

Happily at this moment Mrs. Stavenell, who had been detained below, entered the room.—Hey-day! my dear Lady Emma, she exclaimed, what's the matter?—why you're ready to cry!—Nothing's the matter, said her ladyship, rising and going to the window.—I believe, said Lord Calorne, I have the honour to occasion Lady Emma's tears—it is pity, excited by my absurdity last night, that concerns her, —she is sorry to see I could so far forget myself as to prefer securing the lives of two ladies to risking those of four.—I don't understand it, Mrs. Stavenell replied.—She is vexed, said Lady Maria, that Lord Calorne did not come back to us last night, and she does not chuse to admit as an excuse the impossibility of his doing it.—Well but my dear Lady Emma, said Mrs. Stavenell, I am sure you cannot be angry with Lord Calorne, he's too great a favourite:—you must forgive and forget, beside I hear you wasn't a bit frightened.—Not frightened? returned Lady Emma, I'm sure I was as pale as a ghost, and I shook every joint of me.

No one contradicted her ladyship: that her paleness was not observable was to be accounted for, and her fortitude so far prevailed as to conceal her trembling. Constance blushed for her: that Lord Calorne saw and despised her fondness was not to be doubted, and she rejoiced heartily at his spirit which would not buy her favour by asking her pardon; he justified what he had done on the plea of necessity, but Lady Emma thought herself slighted, and

and would not be convinced : Lady Maria was distressed at her folly ; Mrs. Stavenell tried to soothe her. Having exculpated himself from every suspicion of neglect, which a reasonable mind could entertain, and proved to the satisfaction of all who would be satisfied, that she who complained was one of those whom he meant and had done all in his power to assist, Lord Calorne took his leave, and then the subject was renewed by Mrs. Stavenell, who seemed highly diverted with Lord Farnford's exploit.—I shall roast him for it, said she, when I catch him :—he shall squire ladies again truly !—I shall beseech him next time to take care and be sober.—I am very happy, said Lady Maria, that we escaped so well :—had Lord Calorne done as Emma would have had him, I do not know how we should have got away :—it was impossible for one gentleman to take care of four of us, and I really thought Miss Fitzarthur would have fainted :—it was the most essential service that could be rendered us to take charge of her ; for supposing she had fainted in the lobby, she would in all probability have been suffocated or trampled to death.

Constance wishing this subject forgotten, and Lady Emma restored to her good humour, changed the discourse, and nothing more was said on the subject while their visitors stayed. Before they went, Lady Maria engaged Mrs. Stavenell's family to dine with them the next day, when Mademoiselle Rouf-
son

son was to make her first appearance at Lord Farnford's.

C H A P. XVII.

S U R P R I S E.

A Suspicion, by no means painful, had for some days existed in the mind of Constance that Mr. Stavenell's commiseration for Mademoiselle Rousson, and her gratitude to him, had produced an attachment of a different kind : at first she inclined to think herself mistaken, believing that so much as Adelaide had already confided in her, she would not in this instance have kept her ignorant ; but every circumstance strengthening the former opinion, and Adelaide still continuing silent on the subject, she found that her conjecture might be right, and yet want the proof she expected. Mr. Stavenell's behaviour, though it was far from indifferent, did not afford such ground for the supposition as Adelaide's did : she appeared, when alone with Miss Fitzarthur, to be in fear of discovering in her conversation something which was to be concealed : her answers were often studied and cautious,

tious, in expressions of obligation to Mr. Stavenell, a theme on which she had hitherto been lavish, she was now restrained and brief; and whenever Constance mentioned him, which she sometimes did to give her an opportunity of disclosing what she thought it inconsistent with the true spirit of friendship to conceal, Mademoiselle Rouffon's countenance proclaimed uneasiness, and she either interrupted her by suddenly introducing some foreign topic, or by making some excuse to get out of the room. As such an union had nothing in itself dishonourable, and would have given not only Constance but Mrs. Stavenell pleasure, she was surprised and hurt at the secrecy observed; she however would not gratify her curiosity by inquiries which, though intimacy might warrant, were liable, if disliked, to be condemned as impertinent: she hoped she was not excluded from Adelaide's confidence because she was thought unworthy of it, and candidly concluded that the fear of being charged with too sudden a versatility, in having so soon accepted consolation for the loss of her former lover, was the cause to which her friend's silence was to be ascribed.

In the life which Adelaide at this time led, and which Mr. Stavenell by every possible method strove to render pleasing to her, all remembrance of what was passed seemed to be obliterated; her spirits were restored not only to calmness, but to hilarity, and from her apparent enjoyment of her present

present situation, it was not unfair or absurd to suppose that any thing which had detained her in England would not have been deemed a misfortune ; she however did not appear to regret the necessity of her quitting it, nor could she, if Miss Fitzarthur's conjecture was right, because Mr. Stavenell had promised to go with her.

The time named for her departure now drew very near, and the idea of parting with Constance dejected her : her spirits drooped in proportion as the day approached, nor was the concern of her friend, less : Constance's loss was certainly the greater, as she must be totally deprived of all the advantage she had derived from her society, without any compensation : in Adelaide she had found a friend to whom she could and did communicate every circumstance of her situation ; ever ready to hear her complaints, to rejoice in her pleasures, and alleviate her mortifications ; when she was gone her life was comparatively solitary, she had no one to whom she could speak unreservedly, whose advice she could always ask and trust ; no one in whose conversation she could forget the vexations of the day. Mrs. Stavenell, however attached to her niece, was not a person on whose judgment she could rely, nor was she capable of affording, to a mind like Constance's, any intellectual satisfaction : Lady Maria's friendship she had experienced, but the fear of Lord Farnford prevented such an intimacy as they both wished : she hardly ever called on his sisters without seeing
him,

him, and though there was nothing in his behaviour at which she could reasonably be offended, she was convinced that a very little relaxation of the restraint she assumed towards him would encourage him, and she had too much reason to believe that should her suspicions of Lord Reycoln be either known or confirmed, she would be subjected to all the importunity she had for some time repressed, which aided by Mrs. Stavenell's partiality for Lord Farnford, would, if Lord Reycoln should avow a change of sentiment, oblige her to return to Marstonbury.

About the time when she expected him in town, she received letters from Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, by which she learnt that he had been with them, and that every thing respecting the intended marriage was agreed on; even the time was fixed, which was to be in a few months: this precipitation did not please Constance, who wished to be assured that Lord Reycoln was perfectly satisfied; nothing however in her father's letter indicated his having discovered any alteration in him, Lady Barbara mentioned the depression of his spirits, but seemed convinced it was only a temporary indisposition. Angry therefore at herself for supposing she had so much sagacity as to perceive that, which had escaped the observation of those so interested for her, she believed she had done Lord Reycoln injustice, and endeavoured to divest herself of her former prejudicial opinion, in order to

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judge fairly and candidly of him when she should see him.

In the morning of Mademoiselle Rousson's departure, the grief of the two ladies was so great as to disable the one from making, and the other from assisting in any necessary preparations for it: after a thousand promises of unchangeable friendship and wishes that their separation might not be long, Constance, forgetting in her sorrow her resolution to say nothing that indicated the discovery she had made, said,—*Can* you not, or *will* you not give me any hope that we may soon meet again?—Adelaide made no reply.—Tell me, said Constance, will you return?—will Mr. Stavenell bring you back again?—Apparently embarrassed by this question, Mademoiselle Rousson answered:—Do not ask me:—I cannot tell;—I know nothing, Constance said no more; a summons to breakfast called her away, and Adelaide, desiring her to go first, said she would follow her immediately.

At the foot of the stairs a servant met Miss Fitzarthur, and told her Lord Reycoln was in the parlour: she was rather vexed at this mal-a-propos visit, at a time when she did not wish for witnesses of her sorrow, and it was too great to be concealed; but there was no possibility of avoiding seeing him, and she went into the room:—he looked rather better than when he left town, and behaved more rationally, said he had returned but the preceeding night from his father's, excused his not having called

led then by the late hour at which he arrived, and with much earnestness inquired why Miss Fitzarthur's countenance wore so melancholy an appearance.—Oh! said Mrs. Stavenell, you mustn't mind it, we've had a young lass with us, and she's going away, so my niece has been treating her with a sweet cry.

Lord Reycoln had accepted an invitation to stay breakfast, and just as Mrs. Stavenell had accounted to him for her niece's looks, Mademoiselle Rousson, whom he had never yet seen, came in: on her opening the door she perceived a stranger, and not caring to expose those feelings which could not be suppressed, and were still more painful if restrained, she was retiring, hoping that, as the person sat with his back towards her, she had not been seen; but Mrs. Stavenell desiring her to come in, and saying,—It's only Lord Reycoln,—he won't bite you:—she again advanced, and had scarcely entered the room when, he rising and looking earnestly at her, exclaimed:—Gracious God! are you not my Adelaide?—She raised her eyes and saying,—O Dieu aide-moi:—would have fallen to the ground had he not caught her. The curiosity which this scene excited was forced to give way to concern for her: she soon recovered, and bursting into tears remained unable to speak: Lord Reycoln again addressed himself to her, saying—~~Speak~~—tell me I am not deceived—tell me you are Mademoiselle Rousson,—O cruel; wicked Mr. Besworth—was all Adelaide could reply:

—Do not call me so, said Lord Reycoln, I do not deserve it.—Are you not then Mr. Bésworth? said she:—if you are you must deserve to be called cruel—I am he, his Lordship answered, and could I hope you are still the same unchanged Adelaide Rousson, I should be happy.

Mr. Stavenell now came in, and seeing by Mademoiselle Rousson's countenance, and the confusion in the room, that some accident had happened, he said to her:—What is the matter, ma belle Françoise?—why you look sadly:—these are not travelling looks.—O Charles—said Lord Reycoln, relieve my anxious curiosity, and tell me how she came hither,—How she came? Mr. Stavenell repeated, not understanding his question:—she came post.—You trifle with me, replied Lord Reycoln, who brought her here?—I brought her here, said Mr. Stavenell.—Then returned his lordship, you are the cause of all the misery I have suffered:—did she not quit Calais with you?—She did, Mr. Stavenell answered; but how can I have been the cause of *your* suffering?—You are the cause, Lord Reycoln replied warmly, and nothing shall prevail on me to submit tamely to this outrageous injury.—What injury? said Mr. Stavenell: be cool and explain yourself, and I will convince you.—I am convinced, his Lordship returned,—too well convinced,—but was it not base to take an advantage of my absence?—Are you then the man who so cruelly deserted Mademoiselle Rousson? said her protector.

—I did

—I did not desert her, Lord Reycolm replied ; I was prevented from meeting her, and you prevailed on her to accept you in my stead :—I leave her with you, but you shall answer for it.—Miss Fitzarthur, said he, addressing himself to her, if I have not proved myself too great a scoundrel, may I beg to speak to you in another place.—No, replied Constance, first hear what Mr. Stavenell can say,—it is very fit this affair should be immediately explained, and to my knowledge his conduct deserves your thanks instead of your anger :—How your lordship can clear yourself of the charge of deserting Mademoiselle Rouffon, you best know : you should at least do that, before you become an accuser.—I have not Charles's phlegmatic disposition, he answered, nor do I suppose he could bear such an injury more coolly ; but I will endeavour to be calm :—I will hear him,—but if he fails in his justification, I trust he will not refuse me the only satisfaction I can receive.—With all my heart you shall have it, replied Mr. Stavenell, on condition that you immediately account to this lady for your desertion of her :—I will then, and not till then, tell you how I met with her, and give you any other satisfaction you can desire.

C H A P. XVIII.

EXPLANATION.

DURING this colloquy, in which each was an accuser, and each a defendant, Mrs. Stavenell had remained silent, and astonished; Adelaide in tears, and Constance with all the anxiety of friendship was administering the means of support to her. Whether the conjecture respecting Mr. Stavenell and Mademoiselle Rouillon was not erroneous was now doubtful; the firmness of his behaviour rather contradicted the supposition; nothing but surprise had yet appeared to alter his countenance, and it indicated only a desire to restore her to peace, and to exculpate himself.

Lord Reycoth, consenting to his proposition, seating himself by Adelaide, said to her:—You may remember I wrote to inform you when and where I could meet you, and to tell you that I was going for a few days to a friend's house, from whence I should not return till the day before that when I was to be with you: Two days after I wrote that letter I had a fall from my horse, and was so hurt as to be confined to my bed near a fortnight: of what passed during the first ten days I am wholly insensible: but in my first interval of reason I recollected my engagements with you, and

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on asking what day of the week it then was, I found the time I had fixed was already elapsed : I immediately dispatched my own servant, who used to bring you my letters, to Calais, hoping that you might possibly be still at the inn, but to my inexpressible mortification learned that you had sailed that morning with an English gentleman ; I could get no farther information, and determined to risque the consequence of following you, ill as I was ; but as I could not reveal the motives to this hazardous undertaking, all my efforts were considered as a return of my delirium, and of course were vigorously opposed ; this disappointment increased the fever which was before considerably abated, and confined me another week : the very first day that I was allowed to go out I went to Calais, flattering myself you had expected to meet me at Dover, and might have left a letter for me, or that you might have returned about that time to Calais, but I could obtain no other satisfaction than a confirmation of what I had hear'd ; all my endeavours to learn who your fellow traveller was were ineffectual, every one I inquired of told me I should not know, for that my man had said if I found him he was sure I should kill him, I then resolved on coming to England, and sailed the next day : I was informed by a gentleman of my acquaintance, immediately on my landing, and before I went into any house, that such a lady as I described had been seen there with

an English gentleman, and that they went for Canterbury, but whether that was their place of destination or only in their way, I could not learn, for I was told that they both affected concealment : I followed to Canterbury and was so far fortunate as to go to the house where you had changed horses ; but the mistress would tell me nothing more than that a gentleman, a young lady and her maid, had been there ; she excused herself by saying the lady had enjoined her not to let any one know what road she went. I then could scarcely doubt that you wished to avoid me, yet being still very unwilling to condemn you, I hoped to find you in London, and on my arrival there went to your uncle's house, which I found occupied by another family : here I was informed that your uncle was dead, and that his executor had received a letter from you ; I saw it, and also a copy of the answer, from which I concluded you could not have come on to London, and as you had intimated in your letter that his disapprobation of your conduct, or any impediment to his admitting you as one of his family, would oblige you to return to your friends, that you were gone back to Calais. I went again to Dover, and embarked for France, making inquiries of every one, which were wholly fruitless, for nobody could tell me more than that I knew.—I continued my journey to Paris, and flattered myself you might by this time have written to some of your relations, all access to Mons. Bertmond's house being denied

denied me I could get no satisfaction there, and therefore I applied to some of your most intimate friends : they were as much at a loss as myself ; they had hear'd you were missing, and the report was that you had gone with me. The day before I quitted Paris, by means of bribing one of Mons. Bermond's servants, I gained intelligence of a letter by which your mother was informed you were in England ; more I could not persuade the man to tell me.—To England I then returned with all possible expedition, and, not knowing where else to seek you, came to London. I have been in every place in which I thought there was the shadow of a probability I might find you, and have asked every Frenchman I have seen if he knew your family ; many could tell me you had left Paris, but none whither you were gone ; and now, after all my search, I meet you in a house where I have several times been, and find that this English-gentleman who has so disturbed me, is one in whose honour and friendship I imagined I might have safely confided.

And if you will allow me a candid hearing, replied Mr. Stavenell, you will be convinced that I have not deceived your expectations.—I arrived at Calais the day after Mademoiselle Rousson came there,—she sent me a billet desiring to see me,—she told me her distress, and begged my protection in the voyage to England :—could I refuse it ?—her asking it was a compliment, and the exigency of her situation demanded every relief I could give her.—

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I did as every man of honour would have done, I insisted on staying with her till she was in a place of safety :—I waited with her an answer to the letter she wrote to her uncle, and then, finding his house could not afford her an asylum, I offered her one in my mother's :—hither I brought her, and here she would have remained had not a relation of her's sent her an invitation to Bourdeaux.—As I suppose you have only appeared to her as Mr. Besworth, she did not know you by your title, and though she told us the circumstances of your deserting her she never would mention your name :—that you have not seen her till now, is owing to the concealment which was necessary to prevent the pursuit of her friends, and your being out of town ; for since her going to Bourdeaux was resolved on, she has been visible to all that have come to the house :—and now, Lord Reycoln, continued Mr. Stavenelt, if I am not justified, name the satisfaction you expect :—I am ready to give it you.—I ask nothing, his lordship replied, but your forgiveness, and that of Mademoiselle Rouffon ; will you, my Adelaide, admit my excuse for the breach of my promise, and pardon the suspicions I entertained of you ?—I can forgive them, she answered, still crying, but —Will you then, Lord Reycoln interrupted, allow me in my own person to repeat the assurances I made you as Mr. Besworth, and will you perform to me that promise which you gave him !—No, no, replied Adelaide, indeed I will not ;—they are

two

two different persons ; Mr. Besworth might marry whom he would, but Lord Reycoln must marry Mrs Fitzarthur :—he shall not break his word for me.—I am sorry I have occasioned so much trouble and uneasiness where I have been so generously treated, but I will go to Bourdeaux.—How justly said Lord Reycoln, does your conduct condemn mine ! —I acknowledge my prior engagement to Miss Fitzarthur, and cannot excuse my departure from it.—My lord, you are from this moment freed from it, said Constance ; it was never my intention to hold you bound by it.—You are too generous, interrupted Adelaide, you must not do so, rather let me resign Lord Reycoln, I ought to do it, and I will.

Mr. Stavenell now desired his mother to countermand the orders for the journey, and coming up to Mademoiselle Rousson, he took her hand, and said he wished to have a minute's conversation with her ; they went together into the next room, leaving Lord Reycoln to make the best of his apology to his cousin. Mrs. Stavenell went away to stop the preparations, and Constance who felt for the awkwardness of Lord Reycoln's situation, and was anxious to relieve it, before he could speak said :—the engagement between us certainly ought not to be any impediment to your fulfilling your more recent promise to Mademoiselle Rousson ; it was entered into in compliance with the wishes of your father and mine, who mistook childish fondness for some-

thing more permanent :—I beg you will not suffer any consideration for me to imbitter a joy which believe me I participate ;—I am sure my father will release you :—you have not broken your word, though you may have altered your intention, for you are still unmarried :—You do me injustice if you suspect I shall be angry at your preferring her to me— I am only sorry that I am any obstacle, and I wish that by having been a little less reserved, you would have spared me the difficulty of endeavouring to account for your conduct since you came to England, but I see your embarrassment must have been great, and am rejoiced to find you have so very good an apology for your change.

Indeed replied Lord Reycollm, you hold the same place in my *esteem*, and however paradoxical it may appear, I can with truth say you hold the same place in my *affection*, as you did when I left you at your father's, and it was not till I knew Adelaide that I was conscious the least particle of either remained unengaged to you :—from an acquaintance with her I learnt the difference between love and friendship. I endeavoured by every means to conquer a passion which I could never think myself justified in encouraging, but my efforts were ineffectual, and when I heard that a removal from her mother's house was necessary, I forgot every other consideration, and urged her to accompany me to England :—the remembrance that I was doing wrong I stifled, by flattering myself there was
a possibility

possibility of your wishing yourself freed from your engagement to me, and I thought if I brought her to her uncle's I should have leisure to discover your sentiments: had I perceived any alteration in them, I intended then to acknowledge my affection for her, and, if I did not, I resolved candidly to tell you how I was situated, and to leave it to your generosity to determine whether you would release me, or oblige me to give up your rival; but on my return to England, I was in such a state of suspense with regard to *Mademoiselle Rousson*, that I knew not how to behave to you: as she was the only impediment to my renewing my addresses to you, if my suspicions of her were well founded, to inform you of what was passed would have been needless, and might have cost me the whole of your good opinion; and yet to withdraw my regard from her while I had the least hope that she deserved it, would have been as cruel as I found it impossible: do not shame me, *Miss Fitzarthur*, with saying I have not broken my word to you:—I have not kept it by my own choice; for I will not conceal from you that I offered to marry her, and urged her to it before we left Paris; she would not consent, and her refusal has made me appear less criminal than I really am.—I am amply repaid, *Constance* answered, for whatever painful suspicions your manifest coolness occasioned in my mind by the happiness I am now witness to; I should have been inexpressibly miserable if you had found *Mademoiselle Rousson* when

when it was not in my power to release you :—we must both have been wretched.

Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Stavenell.—Well, said she, how is it settled ?—who is Lord Reycoln to have at last ?—Oh, Mademoiselle Rousson certainly, replied Constance, I have cast him off entirely.—I am glad of it, Mrs. Stavenell answered, 'twas the very thing I wished ; now we may all be happy.—Her niece too well understood the cause of her joy, and who were included in *all* ; but occupied as she was with the present, she did not look to the future, nor did she foresee that by this one act of generosity, she purchased to herself misery beyond what she could have imagined. Lest Mrs. Stavenell should reveal more than she desired Lord Reycoln to know, she turned her attention to the breakfast, which had hitherto remained unregarded ; and Mr. Stavenell and Mademoiselle Rousson were called : Mr. Stavenell answered that he was coming immediately, the door was left open, and Constance who had gone to fetch them, hear'd him say to Adelaide :—I insist on it, or I will never see you again :—you will only expose yourself, for I shall say the same there that I do here.—She made no reply, and they came to the breakfast table, Mademoiselle Rousson still in tears.

What this indicated Constance was afraid to examine ; she began to apprehend that Lord Reycoln's refusal would come from a quarter whence he

he least expected it, and that her conjecture of Adelaide's attachment to Mr. Stavenell was too well founded : instead of her agitation subsiding after the first shock, it evidently increased ; she could eat nothing, and cried vehemently. In a few minutes she went out of the room, and declined Constance's offer to accompany her : her behaviour was matter of astonishment, because it was certainly an unnatural consequence of joy ; but Mr. Stavenell ascribed it all to her unexpected meeting of Lord Reycoln ; and this opinion Miss Fitzarthur endeavoured to support, though she suspected it was erroneous. When breakfast was over she was going up stairs to Adelaide, but Mr. Stavenell following and stopping her, took her into the back parlour, and said to her —From what I have observed and what I have learnt, I am sure you know too much of Mademoiselle Rouillon's affairs to attribute her uncommon perturbation to *joy* :—I may safely trust you with my confidence, and will therefore tell you ingenuously whence it arises, and what I am resolved to do : she says you put a question to her this morning which embarrassed her, and convinced her that your sagacity had discovered our inclinations :—it is therefore needless for me to own what were my intentions and views ; whatever they were, her meeting with Lord Reycoln is an effectual bar to them ; but she has, I am sorry to say, some difficulty in accommodating herself to this change of circumstances ; she would, with an unaccountable

able caprice, at this moment refuse Lord Reycoln, and notwithstanding the satisfactory reasons he gave for his disappointment of her, and the affection he has manifested for her, she would think herself obliged to you if you would insist on his performing his engagement to you. I cannot, replied Constance, it is impossible.—I would not have you do it said he, if it were in your power :—the same caprice that makes her wish to be rid of him, would perhaps soon make her repent her renunciation of him :—with respect to myself, though my success flattered me, and I think myself unfortunate, I am not so attached to her as to hesitate in determining what is fittest to be done :—Lord Reycoln shall have her, and I cannot doubt that her mind will soon recover itself :—with me she would have been unhappy if ever she had met him, for then this capricious humour would have taught her to like him instead of me : I wish therefore that you would take some pains to convince her of her obligation to him ; and have told you the whole of this affair that you might adapt your medicines to her disease. I think it is very probable she may resent my giving her up ; if so, she will encourage Lord Reycoln out of spite, and that will serve, as well as a better motive, to prevent his being uneasy.—Are you sure, said Constance, that you are doing right in obliging her to accept Lord Reycoln ?—supposing that she submits to the necessity with the sentiments she at present entertains, what is their prospect ?

prospect? they will be miserable.—Trust me they will not, replied Mr. Stavenell, I will answer for it that in a week's time she will be very well satisfied, if not pleased: the phyfic may be a little disagreeable, but it is very salutary, and she will thank me for it.—I wish, Miss Fitzarthur answered, that you may prove a true prophet, I acknowledge I have some doubts, and I cannot attempt persuading her. Then only leave her to herself, said Mr. Stavenell, when she finds that I give her no encouragement she will look to Lord Reycoln; for he has certainly the next best place in her affections.—I will do all in my power to make this necessary change easy to her:—you all know I ought to have been at Portsmouth long before this time, and, as I think she is now safe, and no longer needs my protection, I shall set out as soon as I can.—I believe it will be better not to take any notice of what I have told you; I hope my mother has not suspected any particularity between Mademoiselle Rousson and myself, and unless it is mentioned to you, it will be most prudent for us to be silent on the subject. Constance was of Mr. Stavenell's opinion, and in admiration of his conduct left him to visit Adelaide.

She found her sitting alone, looking on the ground, and very busily twisting the corner of her handkerchief round her finger. With some difficulty she persuaded her to move, and they went together to the room where Lord Reycoln
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and Mr. Stavenell were; the latter of whom quitted his seat as they entered, while Lord Reycoln was speaking to Mademoiselle Rousson, said in a low voice to Constance—My mother is called away, and will not be here for some minutes, let us leave them together, come and take a turn in the park with me.—She saw Mr. Stavenell's motive, and agreeing to his proposition, slipped out of the room without Adelaide's perceiving it. The recent events furnished ample subject for conversation, and on their return Constance was much pleased to see her friend's countenance brightened into a smile.

The propriety of immediately informing Mademoiselle Rousson's relation at Bourdeaux of an event which would at least postpone her journey, and the necessity of communicating it to Lord Drumferne were now to be considered; the first Mr. Stavenell took on himself, promising to write before the post went; but the latter was a tender point, especially to Lord Reycoln: that Lord Drumferne would consent to the exchange was problematical; that he would not, was the more probable supposition, and this point required deliberation.—Let me write to him, said Constance, I will try to persuade him; I can truly tell him it is my wish that he should approve what you have done, and, if he thinks it an injury to me, I shall desire him to make me the only reparation by accepting Mademoiselle Rousson in my
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stead.—I must tell him personally, Lord Reycoln answered, and how am I to face him after such a breach of my promise? to tell him how good you are would be to arm him against me, and to take away all hope of his acquiescence: the injury I have done you is aggravated by your merit.—Do not talk of that, said she, I do not wish to hear my own praises: if you will oblige me, shew me how I can be of service.—I will go down to my father's, Lord Reycoln replied, and endeavour to convince him, if what I have done has not already, that I am unworthy of you; but I have equal reason to fear Sir Edward's resentment; he may justly consider this as an insult on his daughter.—I hope, said she, when he knows how sincerely I rejoice in what has happened, he will not think harshly of it.—I would, said his lordship, go immediately to Marstonbury, but that it is necessary I should see my father first; I must therefore write, and follow my letter as soon as I can.—The settlement of these affairs was then concluded by his determining to set out the next morning for Lord Drumferne's: Adelaide was to stay till his return at Mrs. Stavenell's, and, as no excuse less than he had hitherto had, could excuse her son's absence from Portsmouth, it was agreed that he should call on Lord Reycoln, and that, as far as their way lay in the same track, they should travel together.—Adelaide's wavering mind seemed
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now fixed ; she parted from Lord Reycolmar with regret, and he set out from Mrs. Stavenell's with the wishes of all for his success.

C H A P. XIX.

D I S A P P O I N T M E N T.

THE scene which was now opened to Constance's view, was very different from that to which she had for some years been accustomed : she felt no regret at renouncing her expectations ; the happiness which she hoped she promoted absorbed every idea of that kind, and her own pleasure had been unalloyed but for the fear of Lord Farnford's persecution ; she foresaw the only obstacle which he regarded being now removed, she should be exposed to his, Lady Emma's, and Mrs. Stavenell's solicitation : to withstand these efforts united was possible, because her dislike of Lord Farnford was great ; but to live tolerably under them was not to be expected : the only hope she entertained was, that when he was convinced of her real opinion, he would be discouraged, and after some time leave her in peace ; and her only eligible alternative, if he persisted, was to inform her father of her situation, and desire to return

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to Marltonbury; a measure which, however militant to her wishes, she resolved to put in execution, as soon as his lordship grew troublesome.

Lord Reycoln and Mr. Stavenell set off together, and agreed to return about the same time: the absence of the latter had the effect he intended: Adelaide seemed not only reconciled to, but happy in her situation, she continued the life she had for the preceeding fortnight led, and was every where received as the future wife of Lord Reycoln. Constance was very much rejoiced to find that no disagreeable change in Lord Farnford's behavior followed the communication of these events to him: he treated her with more respect than ever, and she, willing to shew him that she marked and approved his conduct, relaxed as much of the *bauteur* she assumed towards him, as she thought she might prudently. Lord Calorne, when he had mentioned to her what he had heard concerning Lord Reycoln, highly applauded her renunciation; but hinted his regret that this accident must in some measure lessen the intimacy between them: his behaviour conformed to his sense of propriety; the distance with which he treated her was increased, and he seemed carefully to avoid all civility that bore the appearance of personality. Lady Maria Peryton, while she rejoiced in every improvement of Constance's situation, was uneasy for her; she had apprehensions respecting Lord Farnford, and frequently warned her lest she should

think

think herself too secure to make caution necessary. Lady Emma's hopes were raised, her perseverance was strengthened, and her brother's passion, ever the topic of her private conversation with Miss Fitzarthur: thus sometimes encouraged by Lord Farnford's attention to decorum to think Lady Maria's suspicions groundless, at other times alarmed by them, and teased by Lady Emma's importunity, she was frequently pleased, terrified, and vexed in the space of twelve hours.

Lord Reycoln performed his promise of writing as soon as he knew his father's sentiments, and to the infinite joy of all interested for him, they learnt that Lord Drumferne's conduct had been such as his son wished; he professed himself very ready to accept of the substitution, provided it was, as Lord Reycoln represented it, with Constance's voluntary concurrence; the pleasure which this event gave Adelaide was greater than her friend had expected, she received the intelligence with appearance of joy, and could not conceal her anxiety lest Sir Edward Fitzarthur's disposition to acquiescence should be less than Lord Drumferne's; but this, Constance, who had written to her father, assured her she had no reason to fear, she had stated to him how much he would oblige her by discharging Lord Reycoln from his engagement, and from his well-known inclination to indulge her, she ventured to become responsible for his compliance.

But in this, however good the foundation of her hopes, she was deceived; her letter was answered in a style far different from her expectations, Sir Edward accused Lord Reycoln of a scandalous evasion of his promise, and said it was absurd to ask his consent to a business which he knew would be concluded whether he gave or withheld it; that all his prospect for her was ruined, and, however inclined she might foolishly be to acquit Lord Reycoln, his conduct to her had been such as nothing could excuse, and such as, if she had the spirit she ought to have, she would resent: that he saw plainly Lord Drumferne's love of money would prevail on him to think very favourably of his son's breach of his word, as Mademoiselle Rousson's fortune was immediately her own: the letter concluded exactly as it began in terms of asperity, and expressions of disappointment.

Constance was much mortified at finding her father's sentiments so contrary to those she had almost pledged herself to ensure for Lord Reycoln; whose offence was not, she thought very glaring, and that it should be so severe a disappointment to Sir Edward astonished her: Mrs. Stavenell had insinuated, on her first coming to her, that it was not deemed by the world a very advantageous match for her: Lord Drumferne's estate, it was well known, was but just sufficient to support his title in the place where he lived, and in London could not have done it; he was not an
English

English peer, nor had his family antiquity to boast : he was himself a man whom her father she was sure disliked ; they had differed on political subjects, and the only links which held them together were their mutual relation to Lady Barbara, and Lord Reycoln's early attachment to his cousin. Why therefore, all these circumstances considered, Sir Edward should incline to resentment, was a question she could not solve, but she hoped that it would subside, and that Lord Reycoln's visit at Marstonbury would reconcile them.

It was in vain to attempt keeping Adelaide ignorant of the contents of this letter ; she was hurt at Sir Edward's anger, and would hardly admit Constance's persuasions to believe it was an effusion of disappointment, and that Lord Reycoln's account would be more favourable : the event proved Adelaide's incredulity justifiable, Sir Edward had answered Lord Reycoln's letter in the most reproachful language, and positively refused to see him : his absence from town was therefore shortened, and he returned to Mrs. Stavenell's in a week.

Sir Edward had expressed no intention of obliging Lord Reycoln to the performance of his promise, nor had he released him from it : it was therefore necessary that something, equivalent to his consent should be procured ; and for this purpose his daughter wrote to him, in such terms as she thought best calculated to appease him ; he answered

answered her letter, but his anger was very little abated, he repeated his expressions of disappointment and to her request, for his acquiescence only replied, that he should be mad to insist on Lord Reycoln's marrying her, as, supposing he could compel him to it, she could expect nothing but the worst usage from him. This, however harsh, was in effect a disavowal of any intention which could oppose her wishes, and it was rendered less unpleasant by a letter from her mother which accompanied it. Lady Barbara rejoiced in Lord Reycoln's having found Mademoiselle Rousson, commended her daughter's conduct, and excused his, adding, that her disappointment was not great, for that, although she had forbore making objections, a marriage between such near relations she could not heartily approve. This opinion, and the terms in which it was conveyed, mitigated the effects of Sir Edward's severity, and his daughter begged that no more might be said on the subject.

Adelaide who wished much, as she had now nothing to apprehend from persecution, that the breach with her mother might be healed, wrote her a circumstantial account of what had passed, entreating that she might be allowed to see her, and offering, if her request was granted, to return immediately: to her making this proposition Lord Reycoln consented, on condition that before she went she would give him a title to accompany her: of this overture to peace Madame Bermond

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took no notice, and Adelaide who was beyond expression mortified, committing herself to the guidance of Lord Reycoln, referred wholly to him the care of what belonged to her, and which her presence in France was now necessary to secure. A day but a few distant was named for their marriage, and Mr. Stavenell, who was not yet returned, was desired to be in town, that he who had been the guardian of Mademoiselle Rousson, might exercise the last act of his power by bestowing her on Lord Reycoln. An excuse instead of acquiescence was the answer: Mr. Stavenell said his business would not admit of his absence from Portsmouth, but that, as he thought any delay might occasion mischief, he would depute Lord Calorne to this office, and would write to ask him to accept it. Miss Fitzarthur, who saw a better reason for what Mr. Stavenell did, than he acknowledged, applauded secretly his prudence, and was very glad that Adelaide's constancy, which seemed now established, would receive no more shocks. Lord Calorne very readily undertook to be Mr. Stavenell's representative: the ceremony was performed on the day appointed, and immediately after it Lord Reycoln and his wife set off for Lord Drumferne's, where they proposed staying a few days, and then continue their journey to Paris.

A *little* comforted by the hope that as England was to be the place of Lord Reycoln's residence,

dence, this was but a temporary and a short separation, and *greatly*, by reflecting on it as the completion of his happiness, Constance bid adieu to the pleasure she had enjoyed in the society of Mademoiselle Rousson : though she felt much at the hour of parting, she summoned all her courage, and, to spare her friend's suffering, affected an air of cheerfulness ; but when she was gone, and the hurry of departure ceased, as if she had been aware that this was a fatal blow to the peace and tranquillity she had hitherto been blessed with, she became absorbed in grief.

Mrs. Stavenell, would not, however, suffer her long to indulge thus ; she herself had none of those weaknesses which though painful, afford pleasure ; her ridicule was called forth to correct her niece, whom she soon forced, at least in her presence, to suppress her tears : to find some one who would sympathize with her, Constance proposed making a visit to Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton, from whom her attention had been for some time diverted ; but this Mrs. Stavenell, contrary to her usual custom, opposed : her reason for it she kept a secret, and Constance seeing it not perfectly agreeable to her, gave up the intention.

C H A P. XX.

A N G E R.

AS Mrs. Stavenell and her niece were the next morning sitting at work together, in a room next the street, they heard a carriage coming uncommonly fast, and with a noise that excited their curiosity, Constance got up to the window, and, just as Mrs. Stavenell had said—Whose is it? a thundering knock at the door informed them it was coming there: a post-chaise and four presently appeared, and Constance saw it was Lord Farnford's?—Where can Lord Farnford have been, said she, it is his carriage, it is splashed all over, and he has hired horses.—We shall know I guess, Mrs. Stavenell answered: I'll go down and meet him.—She went away, and her niece remained at the window. Lord Farnford jumped out of the chaise, with his pocket book in his hand, and ran into of the house: in about ten minutes he and Mrs. Stavenell came up stairs, and Constance heard him say as they crossed the outer room—Insure me success and I am the happiest creature living. They entered the room where Miss Fitzarthur was, she rose, and Lord Farnford advanced towards her. My dear, said Mrs. Stavenell, here's Lord Farnford just come to town.—Your lordship has come
a great

great way, said Constance, if I may judge by the appearance of your equipage.—I have travelled, he replied, thirty-six hours without stopping for any thing more than to change horses, and to transact the business I went on; and in that time have been two hundred and sixty miles.—Some urgent occasion said Miss Fitzarthur; no accident in your family, I hope.—No accident, he answered, but very urgent business: I was desired, madam, to give this letter to you. Constance took a letter which he offered her, and immediately knowing the superscription to be of her father's writing, she started and asked permission to read it. certainly said Mrs. Stavenell, on whose countenance a significant smile was visible, 'twas given you to read. She then opened it, and found the contents these:

‘Dear Daughter,

‘The mortification and disappointment which
 ‘Lord Reycoln’s inexcusable departure from his
 ‘word has occasioned me is in some measure compensated, and my anxiety for you lessened by a proposal which Lord Farnford has done me the honour
 ‘of a journey hither to make to me: he asks my
 ‘permission to declare himself a candidate for your
 ‘favour, which I have without hesitation granted
 ‘him, and have promised to be his advocate with
 ‘you.

‘I trust I need say little to convince you how
 ‘highly for your interest such a match will be:

I 3

‘it

‘ it is beyond my most sanguine expectations for
 ‘ you, both with respect to rank and fortune, his
 ‘ estate is, he assures me, unincumbered, and its
 ‘ annual amount 25,000*l*. Think what an estab-
 ‘ lishment this is, and then judge how much I am
 ‘ delighted with the prospect.

‘ What your sentiments respecting Lord Farn-
 ‘ ford are, I know not : from what he tells me I
 ‘ suppose you are intimately acquainted with him ;
 ‘ but, either from diffidence of his own power, or
 ‘ from an idea that what I say will have great
 ‘ weight with you, he does not chuse to mention
 ‘ his wishes without some authority from me. I
 ‘ am pleased with his candour, and with him ; and,
 ‘ if I am not very much deceived, his affection
 ‘ for you would alone entitle him to your regard :
 ‘ my sister’s attachment to him and to you are
 ‘ proofs that he is deserving of you ; you have
 ‘ ever represented her kindness to you as very
 ‘ great, and I cannot therefore doubt that in fa-
 ‘ vouring Lord Farnford she promotes your in-
 ‘ terest.

‘ I shall impatiently wait an answer from you,
 ‘ and expect to learn your genuine sentiments.
 ‘ Your mother joins in love to my sister and to
 ‘ you, with

‘ Your very affectionate father,

‘ EDWARD FITZARTHUR.’

The surprise, the confusion, and indignation
 which this discovery of the business for which,
 and

and the place whither, Lord Farnford had so expeditiously travelled, excited in Constance, instantaneously manifested themselves in her countenance. When she had read the letter she put it in her pocket, and took up her work without saying a word.—Well my dear, said her aunt, what news? why your letter seems to have disturbed you.—It has indeed, madam, replied Constance; the contents of it are equally unexpected and disagreeable; but it is very easily answered.—How? my dear madam, said his lordship eagerly.—By doing as my father bids me, she returned, by giving him my genuine sentiments.—And what are they, he asked.—I am sure, Constance replied, it is unnecessary for me to tell you what they are, my lord.—It is indeed, said he, the reception you have given his letter is a sufficient indication of what they are, and confirms my apprehensions that I should find you still the same cruel obdurate Miss Fitzarthur; remember your father is my friend, and I doubt not he will effect a relaxation of your severity.—If, answered she, your lordship could be mean enough to rely on my father's authority, you would soon see your error, he has an undoubted right to controul all my actions, but he can have no dominion over my mind; nor will he, I am convinced, one moment urge the purport of his letter, when he knows how contrary it is to my inclination—his parental anxiety for my happiness, and the deception of

specious appearances have misled him ; he will soon be better informed, and I hope, as you thought his patronage necessary in this instance, you will pay equal deference to his authority when he desires you to desist : your lordship was not ignorant of my opinion on the subject, and I must tell you that I cannot look on this privately obtaining the sanction of his approbation as any other than a very unhandsome method of endeavouring to impose on my judgment, and such as no gentleman would have adopted : it has however failed, and ever will fail.

To rid herself of the painful task of disputation she would now have quitted the room ; but Mrs. Stavenell seeing her rising, interposed, saying—I desire Miss, that we may have none of your tragedy airs : to talk so to Lord Farnford, and then to fling out of the room in a passion, is a kind of way of behaviour I don't understand : for goodness sake what ails you ? what is it you're angry at ? a mighty affront I can but say : God keep me from such touchy people.—Unwilling to offend her, Constance sat down again ; and Lord Farnford, not at all discouraged by this manifestation of her dislike to him, drew his chair close to her, and endeavoured to soothe her : it was in this situation that Mrs. Stavenell, with an unpardonable degree of insensibility and imprudence, left her and went out of the room : her presence, it was true, was no restraint on Lord Farnford, but it
was

was an ideal security to her niece, who now again attempted to rise, when he seizing her hand, with his natural impetuosity, swore she should not go: you must not leave me he said in your present disposition; you must, Miss Fitzarthur, hear me: you are not ignorant of my love for you; and if I have erred in what I have done, impute it to my fear of losing you. I knew the influence Sir Edward had over you, and surely I was not very wrong in trying to win him on my side: did you not once say, that supposing you were not engaged to Lord Reycolm, your father's judgement would be the rule of your conduct?—Certainly Constance replied, it ought in general to be so, but not in this instance, where my resolutions are formed on such principles as he himself would approve and support, were he unbiassed.—Your opinion, he returned, has no other foundation than prejudice.—It is founded on reason said she, and is unalterably fixed: I am certain, my father would never, in such a case command my obedience, and as certain, that while allowed to exercise my own judgment, I shall ever think and act as I do now.—You shall not, replied Lord Farnford, with an oath:—on you the future happiness of my life depends, and I will not quit you till you relent.—Mrs. Stavenell is my friend, I have your father's approbation and authority, and of these I shall avail myself in full force: surely, for all the anxious, the sleepless hours which I passed while

thought you another's, I deserve something less harsh than your refusal to hear me : when I knew that you were offended by my enjoying the little freedom you allowed me, I forbore even that, and have suffered in silence ; but a longer silence it would be unreasonable and useless in you to expect, and in me to impose on myself ; and if you remain inflexible, I shall impute it to another cause.—To what cause ? said Miss Fitzarthur.—Calorne loves you, his lordship answered, and you return his passion.—You are grossly deceived, replied she ; my sentiments are not the consequence of any other attachment, they are such as my acquaintance with you has produced.—In the first fact, said Lord Farnford, I will swear I am not deceived : that Calorne entertains a passion for you he himself would not deny ; and my belief that you accept it is well founded ; you own your friendship for him, I know it is more than friendship ; and you can have no other excuse for using me so ill.—Constance remained silent, and he continued—Your silence is an additional proof of my assertion : he has secretly obtained your affections, and he shall answer for supplanting me.

Not to speak now, however uninclined Constance found herself to hold any conversation with Lord Farnford, was criminal, and might be attended with serious consequences to Lord Calorne : she therefore replied—that whoever had given him such information had imposed on him ; that so far
was

was what he suspected from being true, it was a subject on which Lord Calorne had never spoken to her, nor did she believe it had ever entered his imagination, for that, since her engagement to Lord Reycoln had been dissolved, if there was any difference in Lord Calorne's behaviour, it rather indicated a fear of being thought to entertain such sentiments.—Is this true indeed ? said Lord Farnford, looking stedfastly at her.—Your doubting it, Constance replied, is an insult,—I scorn to deceive you or any one ; but if I must accommodate my assurances to your incredulity, that you may not remain in this error, I will say that on my honour it is true.

I am satisfied answered he, and am obliged to you for your condescension,—now tell me ingenuously to what cause am I to attribute your aversion to me ?—To your own conduct, she replied :—my aversion, as you term it, is not natural ; it is the consequence of a very superficial investigation of your lordship's libertine character,—and may heaven defend me from knowing more of it.—I am sure my father will readily admit the objections I shall make.—I own, he said, after a pause, that they are strong objections to one who has been educated with such rigid notions, yet, as you say your aversion is not natural, may I not hope it is removeable ?—the effect must cease with the cause, and the cause shall cease.—I do not pretend, Miss Fitzarthur, to have led a very regular life hitherto, you shall have

the merit of reforming me—it depends on you to determine whether I shall continue or abandon my mode of life :—speak but a word, and from this moment I bid an eternal adieu to every irregularity. —The cause may cease, Constance replied, and the effect still subsist :—our forgetting and even abandoning our errors will not obliterate them :—the task of reformation is too arduous for me to undertake, were I inclined to it, and to spare all farther altercation, as your lordship has done me the justice to believe me in one instance, give me but the like credit when I assure you, that all the prayers and protestations with which you may chuse to importune me will be inefficacious—my resolution is fixed, and I must lose my senses before I change it.

Mrs. Stavenell now entering with Lady Emma Peryton, asked how the two good folks had settled it, and was answered by her-niece that she hoped Lord Farnford was convinced of the truth of that in which she had uniformly persisted : Lady Emma then taking her brother's part, began to remonstrate with Constance, who yet remained firm, told her ladyship how useless all she could say would be, and represented the cruelty of their importuning her. While his sister and Miss Fitzarthur were thus engaged, Lord Farnford had retired with Mrs. Stavenell to a window at the other end of the room, and they were in close conversation when, presently he, taking his hat, went away without speaking to either of the two ladies ; Lady Emma soon
after

after followed him, and Constance was left to Mrs. Stavenell, who for upwards of an hour exerted all her eloquence in behalf of her favourite, condemning in severe terms, her niece's obstinacy.

C H A P. XXI.

ENTREATY.

IT was now that Constance heartily repented her having foreborne to represent Lord Farnford's character in its true and odious colours to her father :—she had believed that if her friends at Marstonbury knew that her situation in town was rendered disagreeable by his conduct, she should be required to return home; but, as this was a sacrifice of much pleasure, for the sake of avoiding what at that time was but a small evil, she had in her letters said nothing that indicated uneasiness, and it was to this omission that she supposed her father's acceptance of Lord Farnford was owing: she now, though the path she was to pursue was too plainly marked out to need an adviser, wished much for the presence of some one who would encourage her: but her wishes were vain: Mrs. Stavenell was no protection to her, Lady Maria Peryton she could not,

not, except by chance, and when perhaps she had no opportunity of conversation with her, see otherwise than by going to her brother's house, which was running into the mischief she strove to avoid : Lady Emma's abilities, small as they were, were directed against her, and to add to her distress there was now no prospect of Mr. Stavenell's return :—his ship had been unexpectedly ordered on a cruise, and so suddenly that he had not even time to return to London. There was no one of her acquaintance whose power and inclination she imagined herself capable of interesting for her, beside Lord Calorne, and here her delicacy interposed ; she valued his good opinion, of which such an act as asking his protection would she feared hazard the loss, and many other considerations strengthening her reluctance to avail herself of his friendship, she was left to the guidance of her own discretion, and the support of conscious rectitude of intention.

In the evening of this day she wrote to her father ; she told him her dislike of Lord Farnford, and that it was founded on the unprincipled libertinism of his character ; that she was certain, however he might have appeared on a first interview, an enlarged knowledge of him would shew the imposition, and she concluded with begging that his importunity might be stopped by the same authority which had permitted it.

Not doubting that the return of the post would free her from her painful situation, she prepared herself

self to bear it till then with fortitude, and was not a little pleased to hear in the morning, from her aunt, that Lord Farnford resented her behaviour : this information was accompanied by a warning that she would repent what she had done ; but she, convinced that no repentance could be so severe as that of marrying a man, whom she not only did not love, but, as far as is consistent with charity, hated, heard all with patience, and without reply : it gave her concern to see that Mrs. Stavenell's interest in this business affected her disposition towards her : she was evidently offended, and the kindness with which she had till now treated her, was in a great degree withdrawn.

Lady Maria Peryton was an uncommonly long time absent from Mrs. Stavenell's, and Constance, not chusing to go to her, had no opportunity of telling her what had passed : Lord Farnford called twice before Sir Edward's answer arrived, but did not come into the room where Miss Fitzarthur was : —her aunt continued unremittingly her endeavours for him, sometimes trying persuasion, then reproaches, and often warning her to beware of the consequences of her perverseness.

This unexpected cause of vexation so far depressed Constance's spirits as entirely to take away all inclination to amusement ; her aunt went therefore unaccompanied to her several engagements, and left her ample leisure to contemplate her unpleasing situation ; in these hours of solitude, which the agitation

tation of her mind forbid her to employ in any way that would render them less tedious ; she recollected many circumstances that might, had she understood them rightly, have warned her of her danger ; the respect with which Lord Farnford had affected to treat her before Lord Reycoln went away, she now saw was but a prelude to his scheme, and Mrs. Stavenell's unusual opposition of her intention to call on Lady Maria the day before Lord Farnford's arrival was now explained, as she must have heard of his absence from town, and might have suspected what he and his friends wished to conceal till he declared it.

Sir Edward's answer arrived the day when it was expected, and all anxiety on that head his daughter flattered herself would end : what then must have been her surprise, when she found that, far from admitting her reasons, he endeavoured to overcome them, and that his proposition was strengthened into something not very different from a command ! he began by telling her, that by the same post which brought her letter he had received one from Lord Farnford, communicating the particulars of the reception she had given him, the objection she had made to him, and her refusal to admit as of any force, his promise to correct whatever was the cause of her dislike, and entreating Sir Edward again to become his advocate : he then stated afresh to her the advantage of the offer, said that her accepting it was *necessary*, and that *he had reasons for urging it,*

it, which, if he thought prudent to assign, must have weight with her : he told her it was her little knowledge of the world that made her see Lord Farnford's errors in so magnifying a point of view, that her refined opinions were the consequences of a re-cluse education, but that she would find herself much mistaken if she imagined they were those of the world ; that Lord Farnford's promise of amendment ought to satisfy her, that his love for her was excessive, and that *there were reasons for, which counterbalanced all against, her immediately accepting so very eligible an offer.*

Had not Constance been intimately acquainted with her father's hand-writing, nothing would have persuaded her that this letter, containing doctrine directly opposite to that he had ever maintained, was not a forgery ;—but the evidence of its authenticity was indubitable, and the perusal of it was followed by a shower of tears : Mrs. Stavenell, who was present with her when it arrived, seeing its effect on her, took it out of her hand, and read it : then began a more forcible repetition of all she had heard on the subject ; obstinacy, perverseness, and folly were terms not too harsh to express her aunt's resentment, and Constance retired weeping : she was called to dinner, and, coming into the parlour, saw there the cause of all her uneasiness ; the tears were still in her eyes, and she took no notice of him : they sat down almost in silence ; she eat nothing, and had she not feared irritating Mrs. Stavenell,

nell, would have left the room: Lord Farnford watched her countenance, and urged her to eat, till his too kind friend desired him to let Miss Fitzarthur do as she chose, and to say nothing to her; he then desisted, and their unsocial meal concluded.

As soon as the cloth was removed, Lord Farnford addressing himself to Constance, said,—What effect, Madam, may I hope Sir Edward's letter has had on you?—It has had that, she replied, bursting into tears, of making me completely unhappy.—For goodness sake, child, said Mrs. Stavenell, don't be ridiculous:—mighty unhappy truly you are!—I warrant you wish you was dead, or had never been born.—My dear Miss Fitzarthur interposed his lordship, I cannot bear to see you in tears, when you might, by overcoming this one unreasonable prejudice, remove every occasion of grief; and make me, your father, and good Mrs. Stavenell so happy:—do but in this instance, as Sir Edward says you have in every action of your life hitherto, obey him, and trust to me you shall have no cause to blame your generosity.—I cannot, my lord, replied Constance, and I am sure it is only to my having failed in representing how miserable such obedience would make me, that what I now suffer is to be attributed:—my father is anxious for my happiness, and you have persuaded him that my compliance will promote it:—I still therefore am certain, that when he is undeceived, he will be as
averse

averse to it as he is now strenuous for it :—his affection for me has been uniform, and I will never believe he could for a moment entertain an idea of obliging me to do that, which he shall be convinced, is against my inclination :—he may be deceived, but he cannot be arbitrary.

Having given his lordship this discouraging assurance, and finding herself unable to bear farther contest, she was rising to leave the room, when Mrs. Stavenell asked her why she was going.—I am going, she answered, because I am very unfit for company, and indeed to avoid the useless repetition I have so often been forced to hear.—You're not fit to be by yourself, said Mrs Stavenell, so I desire you'll stay here.—Constance obeyed, and presently her aunt, being engaged out for the evening, went away to do something to her dress : determined to defeat whatever purpose this critical withdrawing might be intended to serve, as soon as Lord Farnford began to speak, Miss Fitzarthur hastily quitted her seat, and went out of the room ; she retired to her chamber and resolved not to go down again while he staid. The perturbation of her mind was for some time too great for her to do any thing, but when she had sufficient command of her hand to guide a pen, she sat down and wrote as follows to her father :

‘ Could my honoured father at this moment see
‘ his unhappy daughter, I am sure he would im-
‘ mediately relinquish his design :—for the first time
‘ in my life I find it difficult to obey you, yet, if
‘ I fail

' fail in this attempt, I have no alternative.—I
 ' must obey you ;—and in doing so, I must sacri-
 ' fice every hope of peace in this world.—I am con-
 ' vinced it is an opinion that, however averse I may
 ' at first be to complying with, (I am sorry to say,
 ' your *commands*,) in the end it will prove for my
 ' advantage, that dictates your letter.—Lord Farn-
 ' ford's rank and fortune are, I own, infinitely
 ' above what I could expect :—they are
 ' equally above what I wish ;—and what is he
 ' himself ? Good heaven, my dear father, you
 ' know him only by his own report :—is it to be
 ' supposed that he would tell you what he knew
 ' must be answered by an assurance that you would
 ' never trust to his care one whom it had cost so
 ' much anxiety and pains to educate with a fit idea
 ' of the difference between virtue and vice ?—Is an
 ' abandoned libertine,—one who is, I may truly
 ' say, lost to all sense of shame,—who alone depends
 ' on a matchless effrontery, the person for whom
 ' Lady Barbara Fitzarthur with such unremitting
 ' attention reared her daughter ? Can his coronet,
 ' can his large estate annihilate or cancel his
 ' vices.

' And is my father an advocate for vice ?—it
 ' cannot be :—it is the absence of it from his
 ' character that makes him to appearance its advo-
 ' cate : Lord Farnford promises reformation, and
 ' my father charitably believes him, and in his
 ' paternal anxiety to promote his child, does vio-
 ' lence

‘ lence to himself by under-rating the irregularity
‘ of his life hitherto :—How improbable is it that I
‘ should have that power over Lord Farnford which
‘ his reason and conscience have lost !—he may
‘ perhaps be sincere in his intentions, and he might,
‘ for a short time, fulfil his promise, but what a
‘ risque is this ! and why am I to be exposed to it ?
‘ —my judgment is not controuled by any partiality
‘ for him :—the first hour I saw him his behaviour
‘ disgusted me ; and though he may not be wholly
‘ destitute of good qualities, and it is here the custom
‘ to admire him, I speak sincerely when I say that
‘ were the grave my only alternative in refusing him,
‘ I would prefer it to the horror of marrying such a man.

‘ If I am to obey—your commands must be
‘ peremptory :—do not make me responsible for the
‘ future calamities of my life by subjecting what
‘ you say to two constructions, and hazarding my
‘ misunderstanding it.—My father, whose affection
‘ I acknowledge with gratitude,—who never I believe
‘ in thought thwarted my inclination ; must now
‘ say, that disregarding his daughter’s prayers,
‘ and anxious only to raise her to a rank of which
‘ she is not ambitious, he *commands* her to marry
‘ the man whom of all others she detests :—if my
‘ father can say so, I, let it cost what it may,
‘ will obey him.

‘ But I am convinced he cannot be cruel, and
‘ this would be cruelty : I know he will attend to
me

‘ me, and not urge this again. May I beg, Sir,
 ‘ that the return of the post may assure me of your
 ‘ acquiescence in my wish, and that you would
 ‘ write to my persecutor a prohibition of his farther
 ‘ persisting.

‘ I intend writing by this conveyance to my mo-
 ‘ ther, and am,

‘ Your most obedient,

‘ CONSTANCE MATILDA FITZARTHUR.’

Her letter to Lady Barbara was this:

‘ I am sure my dear mother is unhappy, and yet I
 ‘ must add to her sufferings by telling her mine:—
 ‘ you undoubtedly know, Madam, what has passed
 ‘ between my father and Lord Farnford, and have
 ‘ seen my answer to the proposal: you can judge
 ‘ then what I felt when I found my obedience was
 ‘ peremptorily required: I have just finished writ-
 ‘ ing to my father, and this being my last resource,
 ‘ I strengthen it by entreating your interposition
 ‘ to save me.

‘ You do not, you cannot, I am convinced, ap-
 ‘ prove my being compelled to an act which I ab-
 ‘ hor:—you have taught me to obey the dictates
 ‘ of my conscience, and this loudly forbids my
 ‘ compliance, but you have likewise taught me that
 ‘ obedience is due to my father:—must I then obey
 ‘ him? must I, as he commands me, lay aside
 ‘ all prejudices, enlarge my knowledge of the
 ‘ world, learn to think less severely; and to esteem
 ‘ Lord Farnford’s offer as an honour?—and to

‘ what purpose am I thus to correct my judgment?
‘ —that I may be enabled to promise love and obedience to a man, for whom I have hitherto felt
‘ nothing nearer affection than pity and contempt,
‘ and whose conduct has, almost uniformly, excited
‘ disgust in me. Before this change can be effected in my mind I must have forgotten all you have
‘ with so much labour imprinted on it. I remember at one time, when you feared my regard for
‘ Lord Reycolm was less than it should be, you
‘ said that if I found in myself the least disinclination to him, my becoming his wife was criminal,
‘ and could only be attended with fatal consequences :—your sentiments I trust are still the
‘ same ; and yet there was a time when I would
‘ have pledged my life that my father never could
‘ do an act that I should think arbitrary or severe.

‘ Do, my ever affectionate mother, intercede for me :—tell Sir Edward he is forcing me to an
‘ union with one against whom all our sex ought to
‘ join.—O Madam, had you seen what I have ;
‘ had you seen a lovely modest ingenuous woman
‘ whom he has basely seduced ;—had you seen an
‘ innocent babe, who claims and is refused his parental attention ;—had you heard him, with a degree of effrontery scarcely credible, first prevaricate, and then avow this infant for his own, you
‘ would shudder at the danger I am exposed to.

‘ But if you, to whose judgment I appeal and
‘ trust, can think that vices of this kind are
‘ counter-

‘ counterbalanced by his title and fortune, I am silent and will submit :—my father seems to have some hidden reason for his command ; can there be any for such a sacrifice ? if it is necessary, I beg you will, by recalling me to Marstonbury immediately, withdraw me at least for a time from the horrid importunity I am forced to bear ; perhaps you can reconcile me to my fate ;—here nothing can.

‘ Should I be so happy as to succeed, and indeed my expectations are sanguine, I still must beg to return home : to remain where Lord Farnford has access to me, will be painful, even when I know I have nothing to fear, for I am sure neither he nor his friends will be soon discouraged ; the kindness of his elder sister is very great to me, she warned me against what I now suffer, and by acquainting me with his true character has convinced me that positive misery is the least that can be expected from such a connexion.

‘ What shall I say more ?—I trust nothing is necessary :—my tears almost obliterate what I write, yet they shall be suppressed rather than I will forfeit the right of subscribing myself

‘ Your very dutiful daughter,

‘ CONSTANCE MATILDA FITZARTHUR.’

CHAP.

C H A P. XXII.

D E S P A I R.

HAVING dispatched these letters, Constance inquired if Mrs. Stavenell was still at home, and to her great relief, heard that she and Lord Farnford went out together: she gave orders to be denied to every body, and spent the evening in ruminating on the change which a few days had wrought in her situation: to avoid seeing her aunt she went to bed before her return, and thus escaped her reproaches.

But the next morning they were renewed. Lord Farnford came in to breakfast, and never ceased his importunity; all the arguments he could use, all the promises he could make, were exhausted, and exhausted in vain. The hope of receiving a favourable answer from her father was the only consolation that supported her during the time she waited for it, against the united efforts of his lordship, Lady Emma, and Mrs. Stavenell.

At last the day on which she expected a return from Marltonbury arrived, and hope cheered her drooping spirits:—the post came in;—but no letter for her:—her disappointment was severe beyond any thing she had ever felt, and she considered herself now as abandoned, even by her mother:—she

had avowed her having written, and her expectation of an answer on that day ; and, as if desirous of the first intelligence, Lord Farnford dined at Mrs. Stavenell's ; but Constance's disappointment happened just before they sat down, and she could not stay in the room.

So great was Mrs. Stavenell's interest in this affair, that while it was pending she had declined almost all engagements, and had spent that time which should have been devoted to cards and company, in exertions of her rhetorical powers.—It is difficult to determine which of the employments was most futile, but which was the most criminal is easily decided : her intention was however acquitted, even by her whom it most injured, for the great kindness which she had professed for Constance had so awakened her gratitude, that she could not persuade herself to believe it arose from any thing worse than an error in judgment, which, as it represented this match as desirable, urged her by all means to promote it.

In the evening of this day of mortification, Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton called in, and Constance, for the pleasure of seeing the former, whose long absence had occasioned a suspicion that they were purposely kept asunder, endeavoured to compose her spirits, and went to the drawing-room in her morning dress, which for some days she had had no inclination or motive to change.—As soon as Lady Maria saw her she said,
with

with concern and surprise—My dear Miss Fitzarthur, what is the matter?—you look sadly! have you been ill?—’Tis because she won’t dress herself, said Mrs. Stavenell, before she could answer: I tell her she looks enough to frighten one.—I am sure, replied Constance, my dishabille will be excused, for I am really far from well, and have been so for several days.—I am very sorry for it, Lady Maria returned:—if I had known it I would have sent:—I have not seen you a great while, but, as whenever I have called, I have been told you were out, I did not suspect your being ill.—Constance, whose suspicion that Lady Maria was purposely kept away was now confirmed, she not having been out of the house for a considerable time, was just going to speak, when Lord Farnford, who was still there, interrupted her, and turned the conversation to some foreign subject. Presently Lord Calorne was announced: all Lady Emma’s attention was bestowed on him, while Lord Farnford kept so close to Miss Fitzarthur as effectually to prevent her saying any thing he did not hear.

Tea was just over when a servant came into the room and said, a gentleman below desired to speak with Miss Fitzarthur.—Who is it, said Lord Farnford.—I don’t know, my lord, the servant replied:—The gentleman said, Miss Fitzarthur did not know him, but he wanted to speak to her on particular business,—Will you go down alone to a stranger? said Lord Farnford to her. She answered

ed—Yes, and went into the parlour. The person was a stranger to her, and on inquiring his business she learnt that he was the bearer of a packet from Marstonbury : he gave her two letters which she took trembling, and he said he had one for Lord Farnford, whose address, as it had been committed only to memory, he had forgotten, and wished to know. This was in some measure a confirmation of her hopes ; she told him his lordship was then in the house, and, if he chose to deliver it himself she would send for him, otherwise she would deliver it to him : the gentleman gave it her, and, after having satisfied her queries respecting the health of Sir Edward and Lady Barbary, retired. She staid to read her letters, and opening her father's first, as that on which most depended, was cheered by the words—‘ No consideration on earth shall prevail on me to make you unhappy even in idea.’—It contained every thing that could set her mind at rest : he regretted this new disappointment, said how much the prospect of such an establishment for her had pleased him ; but concluded with an assurance that he would never again urge his wish, and with telling her that he had written to Lord Farnford, acknowledging his obligation to him, and requesting the discontinuance of his addresses. Lady Barbara's letter was equally affectionate with Sir Edward's, whose relinquishment of his intention appeared to afford her the sincerest pleasure : Constance's request to return home was then answered.

“ What

‘ What your father’s reasons for wishing for this match are, I hardly know. I should have thought, even if it had been *your* wish, he never would have consented to it; his disappointment respecting Lord Reyecolm has hurt him much; he thinks your leaving Mrs. Stavenell now would be imprudent, as it might disoblige her, which he bids me tell you, must on no account be done: he is satisfied you will have no more trouble from Lord Farnford, as he has written to him, though politely, peremptorily.’

A weight almost too oppressive to be borne, was now removed from Constance’s mind, and she returned to the drawing-room with the letter for Lord Farnford in her hand, and a smile on her countenance: she went up to him, and giving it him with a slight curtesy, said—From my father, my lord.—From Sir Edward? he replied—pray how came it?—By a special messenger, she answered; he brought me letters, and inquired where he should deliver this.—Have I permission to read it? said he.—By all means, Mrs. Stavenell replied, and turning towards the light he opened it.

Amazement was visible on the countenance of Lady Maria and Lord Calorne; there was however no possibility of making what passed intelligible to either. Lord Farnford read his letter, and giving Miss Fitzarthur a look indicative of the utmost resentment, he took up his hat, went out of the room; and pulled the door as hard as possible after

him :—What can be the matter with my brother ? said Lady Maria.—Nothing of importance, Constance replied in a whisper :—do not ask any questions now, I will tell you another time :—it is nothing that can alarm you, it will rather please you. Lady Emma's features shewed a sympathetic displeasure with her brother's, and Mrs. Stavenell, not having all the information she wanted, followed him out. She was absent some time, during which Lady Maria, Lord Calorne and Constance conversed on general subjects, and Lady Emma sat silent. On Mrs. Stavenell's return, as she passed her niece, she said to her,—My lord says you shall hear from him ;—he's gone away.—Constance made no reply ; her spirits were raised, the evening concluded pleasantly, and the company separated.

As soon as they were gone Mrs. Stavenell desired to see Sir Edward's letter : this her niece produced, but said nothing of her mother's : the reading of it was succeeded by the bitterest reproaches : Constance was proud, haughty, self-conceited, obstinate, every thing that was unamiable ; all this she bore patiently ; and, too grateful for the blessings of the evening to retain any animosity at the hour of rest, she contented herself with replying that her resolution, however erroneous, was now confirmed, and heartily wished Mrs. Stavenell a good night.

C H A P. XXIII.

S E N S I B I L I T Y.

THE next day at noon Lady Emma called on her to take an airing, she was alone in the coach, Lady Maria being indisposed, and when Constance came, ordering it to Hyde-park, she began remonstrating with her on her excessive cruelty ; but in such a way as could not offend, it being between jest and earnest.—I am sure, she said, it must be a penchant for somebody else that makes you so unkind to my brother : come tell me, continued her ladyship, taking Constance's hand, and looking very good-naturedly at her, tell me, isn't it Calorne?—indeed I shan't be jealous, and I'm positive I'm right.—You are mistaken upon my word Lady Emma, Constance answered.—That is impossible, her ladyship returned, while a not-to-be-prevented alteration in her countenance bespoke her interest in the subject ;—remember the play ;—and last night I watched his eyes,—I saw how excessively he was concerned when he heard you weren't well.—I heard the suppressed sigh.—Oh, you can't deceive me.—Yet you are deceived, replied Constance ; were it so, I would ingenuously tell you ;—I have never been backward to own my

K 4

friendship

friendship for Lord Calorne ; if you suspect more, you do me and him injustice.

The subject was near exhausted, and Lady Emma owned herself convinced of her error, when she proposed, as the weather was tempting, getting out of the carriage to walk : to this Constance willingly agreed, and they had not gone a hundred yards before they met Lord Calorne on horseback : his horse was not very tractable, and with some difficulty he made him stand still that he might speak to the two ladies : while they were talking, and when he was off his guard, his horse flew out and threw him over his head to the ground, where he lay motionless. Lady Emma screamed violently, and Constance, whose spirits were yet weak, was so shocked by the suddenness of the accident, that she fainted in the arms of a gentleman who had stopped on seeing the unruliness of the horse. She however soon came to herself, and was led to the carriage, whither Lord Calorne, who had been only stunned by the fall, presently after followed, with Lady Emma. No assurances, that as he was not hurt, he could very safely remount, could prevail on her ladyship ; she insisted on his giving his horse to his servant, and going home in the coach : he said he would not be more brave than prudent, and yielded to her compulsive importunity. The situation of Miss Fitzarthur was particularly distressing : her fainting had rendered the truth of what she

she had just before asserted apparently doubtful, and she very well knew the construction that would be put on it by Lady Emma: she did not wish that Lord Calorne should hear of it, and hoped, as he did not see her, it would be forgotten in Lady Emma's anxiety for him: her hope was vain, her imprudent companion made her inquiries in such terms, as supposed her having been very ill, and drew his attention.

I am afraid, said Lord Calorne, that I frightened Miss Fitzarthur.—A little, replied Constance, your fall was so sudden, that I was not at all prepared for it.—You call this being a *little* frightened, interrupted Lady Emma: pray what do you call being *much* frightened? He looked at Miss Fitzarthur, while her unrelenting ladyship, neither silenced by the confusion of her countenance, nor aware of the propriety of concealing what had happened, refusing to divert herself at the expence of her friend, and at once to try both her sincerity, and that of Lord Calorne, continued—Why: she fainted away the moment you fell.—Really? said he, I do not deserve so much concern, and am more sorry to have called forth such benevolence and sensibility than for the accident itself. The vague construction which he, to whom her embarrassment could not but be visible, put on it, relieved her distress, and he studiously avoided again mentioning this subject: he was sat down at his house in St. James's

K 5 Place.

Place, and Lady Emma returned with Constance to Mrs. Stavenell's.

Here was now a fine field for the railery both of her aunt and friend: Lady Emma ran open-mouthed to relate the adventure, and its effect on Constance, who was soon released by a summons to attend her hair-dresses. That the construction they put on her fainting was unfair, she was convinced; the same effect would, she had no doubt, have been produced by seeing any person in the same perilous situation, especially in the then relaxed state of her spirits, nevertheless, as she knew how industriously what had passed would be reported to Lord Farnford, she was apprehensive that he would consider it as a confirmation of what he had before suspected, and might in the heat of resentment, call on Lord Calorne to answer for that, of which she firmly believed him, as well in thought as in word, innocent; yet she hoped the declaration, which the latter certainly would not, in such a case, scruple to make, if required, that he had never entertained a wish that could excite Lord Farnford's jealousy, would for this night: her next fear was, that by what she considered as weakness, and for which she was heartily angry with herself, she should in some degree have forfeited Lord Calorne's good opinion; she knew that his notions were correct and severe, that he had a high sense of decorum, and was evidently displeased when he saw any woman recede from the dignity of

of her character ; and she thought he might reasonably be disgusted at being informed of that which, if it must have happened, might have been concealed.

She spent the evening from home, and on her return found on her dressing table a letter, which she was told was brought by one of Lord Farnford's servants : it was from him, and as follows :

‘ Portman-square, 5 P. M.

‘ Madam,

‘ I suppose this will find you triumphing in your victory, and rejoicing in the felicity of having by your inflexible obstinacy made me unhappy : you have applied to your father, represented me to him in the colours best suited to your purpose, and, repaying the sincerest love with the most insolent contempt, have forbidden me to entertain the least hope of prevailing on you.

‘ With the hope, you have kindly taken away the wish—I do not despair, but I scorn to entreat you farther : if the offer I made to Sir Edward could not secure him my advocate ; if the passion I avowed for you, and which *demand*ed a return, only increased your natural haughtiness, I should be mad to repeat the one, or not immediately to dismiss the other. In proportion as I once loved you, I resent your conduct ; and can now very willingly comply with your injunctions to be silent. I cannot, however, give up the belief that some other prepossession was the cause of

K 6

‘ your

your disregard of me ; it is now incontrovertibly confirmed to me, and, though you shall have credit for saying what was true, when you told me Calorne had never spoken to you on this head, I am convinced, and nothing shall alter my opinion, that whatever his sentiments for you may be, your's for him are such as I once wished you to entertain for me : And may you, for all you have made me suffer, undergo the torment of seeing yourself slighted and despised by the object of your affections.

You are not the first woman I have loved, you are the first I ever adored, and the first that ever prevailed on me to harbour so strong an intention of marrying : for you I would have renounced every gratification—to you every wish, every thought should have been directed, but you were obdurate : Calorne occupied the whole of your mind, and that heart which only hardened at my continued sufferings, can cease to beat at the sight of him in danger : he is honoured, he is happy, I shall not molest him ; but sincerely wish you may find his spirit so congenial to your's, that he may by disregard and contempt, revenge that with which you have unremittingly treated

F A R N F O R D.

The accusation contained in this angry manifesto provoked Constance, but Lord Farnford's renunciation of his hopes compensated for it : she was pleased

pleased to find his resentment excited, and hoped his advocates would cease their importunity. Mrs. Stavenell, when they met in the morning, seemed to have given up the point, and though her displeasure at first appeared great, and she bitterly condemned her niece's folly and obstinacy, Constance saw this would evaporate, and that she might again be at peace.

Unfortunately in the forenoon Lord Calorne called: Mrs. Stavenell received him: and Constance being above stairs, was sent for: she almost wished to have avoided him; but, as without incivility she could not, she endeavoured to assume an unembarrassed appearance, and chiding herself for a foolish awkwardness, went down stairs, halting at every step to get courage; the longer she hesitated the more she was confused, and at last she went in. Lord Calorne's back was towards her, and at the moment of her entrance Mrs. Stavenell exclaimed—Good God! my dear what's the matter? has any thing frightened you?—She made no reply, but returned Lord Calorne's inquiry after her health.—Come, said her aunt, here's a gentleman so gallant as to come to ask after you, instead of your sending to know how he did.—I hope, said Constance, your lordship has not found any ill effects from your fall.—None, I am much obliged to you, he replied, excepting that I am very stiff.—I dare say, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, there's not half so much in being thrown, as people think

think for ; especially when a fair lady stands by, and faints away.

The colour rose in Miss Fitzarthur's cheeks, and she held down her head to conceal it, when Lord Calorne taking no notice of the latter part of Mrs. Stavenell's speech, answered, that as he was thrown, there was nothing very terrible in it.—My escape, said he, was however very providential, for, had I been a few feet forwarder, I must have, fallen against the root of a tree : my obligation to my horse is very great, for I could not have chosen a better place.—You'll never mount that horse again, will you ? said Mrs. Stavenell.—I have ridden him this morning, he replied, and he really seemed conscious of what he had done yesterday ; notwithstanding the danger he put me in, I would not part with him for any other in the kingdom nor to be insured from an accident of that kind all the rest of my life.—Aye, you red coats, Mrs. Stavenell rejoined, are so mighty valiant : I suppose you'll like the horse the better for this frolic.—Indeed, said Lord Calorne, it would be unjust to lay all the blame on him, for it was in a great measure my own fault.—I can't say, returned Mrs. Stavenell, that Lady Emma, or my niece are much beholden to him : it was well 'twas no worse, or I don't know what would have become of Constance : she looked as white as my apron when she came home ; never saw such a figure in my life : I cou'dn't conceive what was the matter,
till

till Lady Emma told me :—poor soul, she continued, taking her niece's hand, 'twas frightened out of it's wits.—I am more concerned, his lordship replied, for the fright I occasioned the ladies, than for the accident itself; and if either of them suffers in *any* way, for a degree of sensibility which reflects honour on the possessor, I shall have still greater cause for regret: to feel for the dangers and misfortune of others, is one of the most amiable traits in the female character, and I am always sorry to see, that those who are so endued by nature, suffer, beside the pain of their own feelings, from the malignity of those who have greater strength of mind. Courage, however useful and in some cases, necessary it may be, was never intended as a feminine virtue, nor do I, in my private opinion, think what it adds to a lady, is equivalent to what it robs her of. This well-timed reproof, delivered with the utmost politeness, silenced Mrs. Stavenell, and restored her nieces's natural presence of mind: he soon concluded his visit, in which he had with all possible caution avoided every thing that could add to the distress which Constance's countenance proclaimed, and for which Lord Calorne's sagacity, she could not doubt had immediately found a cause.

The evening of this day had for many weeks been destined to a rout at Mrs. Stavenell's, to which she had invited all her acquaintance then in town: Lord Farnford came with his sisters, and

NOW

now his resentment was visible, he passed Miss Fitzarthur without speaking to, or looking at her, and during the whole of the evening studiously forbore every mark of civility: she saw the pains he took to be very rude, and was neither offended nor displeased at it. Lady Maria not chusing to play, an excuse to go together into the tea-room afforded Constance an opportunity of speaking to her in private: she found that she was informed of what had passed respecting Lord Farnford, and was aware that their so seldom meeting was the effect of design.—I am considered, said Lady Maria, as an enemy to the cause, and indeed such I avow myself: I should and shall always be glad to see you, but I can never think of indulging myself at the expence of your ease. I hope, Constance replied, all is now over, and that we may live on the same intimate terms as before: Lord Farnford seems so heartily angry that I have nothing to fear from him.—Do not trust to his anger, answered his sister—however he behaves to you, I assure you it is only when you are present that he is valiant; at home he is dejected beyond conception; he is eternally complaining of you, and though he resents your refusal, I am well convinced that one word of encouragement from you, would make him forget all his anger; and I could, she added, almost wish—Wish what? dear Lady Maria, said Constance.—I do not know, she replied, I pity my brother, and I believe he loves you so sincerely that

that you might do any thing with him ; yet I will not plead for him.—No, if you have any regard for me, Miss Fitzarthur rejoined, do not *you* importune me : I could not refuse you any thing excepting this, and I will not say you could not persuade me : I am sure if I yield I am miserable.—You must then avoid him, said Lady Maria, you would not purposely give pain to another ; and by this necessity I fear I must lose much of your company. They were prevented from saying any more by the entrance of some who had just risen from their cards.

Late in the evening Lord Calorne came ; he spoke to Mrs. Stavenell, and told her he could not stay a quarter of an hour, having called in only to clear himself of any imputation of disrespect in breaking the promise he had given her in the morning, which some unforeseen business had made it difficult to keep. When he was going he said something to Constance about Lord Reycolm, and by this means drawing her from the company, he put a letter in her hand, saying,—May I beg five minutes attention to this ?—She hesitated : her first thought was that he might be employed by Lord Farnford, and she replied that she could not take it without knowing its contents ; I trust said she, Lord Calorne would not be the bearer of a letter of the purport of which he is ignorant ; and I hope, that knowing its contents, he would not, if there was any thing in it that could make me

me

me uneasy, offer it to to me.—I thank you, madam, said he, for the confidence you have in me : I will never forfeit it I assure you, He then took leave, and went away.

C H A P. XXIV.

H O N O U R.

IT was late before Miss Fitzarthur retired to her chamber, and having dismissed her maid, she opened her letter ; she looked first for the signature, which seeing to be Lord Calorne's she, not without some curiosity to know what he could have to say, read it, and found it this :

‘ Madam,

‘ A discovery, which I accidentally made this morning, has convinced me that I have for some time entertained an opinion equally erroneous and injurious to you. Not to keep you in suspense, I must tell you it respects Lord Farnford, between whom and you, I have been often and positively assured, the same connection was intended as Lord Reycoln's acquaintance with Mademoiselle Rousson prevented, I now learn that you have suffered much from his importunity, that he has endeavoured to obtain his purpose by means

means of Sir Edward's authority, and that, in consequence of this you have given him his final dismissal.

Personal obligations to Lord Farnford, and a consequent wish for his success, forbade me attempting to supplant him, and the consciousness that it is not in my power to offer you any thing equivalent to the advantages of his fortune, ought perhaps still to keep me silent: yet, as you by refusing him have shewn your disregard to pecuniary considerations, I know no reason that can longer oppose my declaring myself:—you have the liberty of refusing me too; but relying on the integrity of my heart, I trust madam, that should this be my misfortune, the attempt will not be punished with a loss of the friendship, which began under the auspices of your father, and which, if I do not vainly flatter myself, I have hitherto done nothing to forfeit.

I will not mislead your judgment: to say I have been honoured with your intimate acquaintance is to say I admire and esteem you; and that admiration and esteem should improve into the affection I offer you, is but a natural effect, and much less wonderful than that I should have forced it so long to yield to your obligation to Lord Reycoln, and the wish to promote your happiness by suffering you, had you been so inclined to accept Lord Farnford.

‘ You

‘ You may probably ask why I could not as
 ‘ well say, as write this ; [I might plead that I
 ‘ thought this method would leave you most at
 ‘ liberty, but ingeniously I am too much interested
 ‘ to tell my story verbally : I own that a great
 ‘ part of the future worth of my life must derive
 ‘ its source from you, and though I mean to leave
 ‘ you to the unbiassed determination of your own
 ‘ judgment, and will acquiesce in whatever that
 ‘ may be, yet so deeply am I engaged, that a pe-
 ‘ remptory refusal will force me to quit the place
 ‘ where you are.

‘ I will not say when I shall wait on you, but
 ‘ shall soon do myself the honour of assuring you
 ‘ in person, that I am, madam,

‘ Your most obedient, humble servant,

‘ CALORNE.’

The surprise which Constance felt at the perusal of this letter was genuine : she had till now firmly believed Lord Farnford mistaken in what he had said of Lord Calorne ; but she was forced to confess he was right, and perhaps had she interrogated herself as to the state of her own mind, however ignorant she had hitherto been, she would have discovered that he erred less, than she the day before imagined. Whatever esteem she entertained for Lord Calorne she always considered as the involuntary approbation due to merit ; and her regard for him being such as she must have felt for a deserving brother, she could hardly recon-
 cile

file herself to looking at him in any other light : she could without pain have heard of his marrying any other woman worthy of him; and often wished that Lady Maria were the person : this she thought would have been the completion of her happiness, as she might then have enjoyed the friendship of both without restraint.

The proposal did not, however, so diametrically cross her views as to displease her : to be esteemed by a man of understanding is certainly gratifying to a sensible woman, and to be thought worthy of Lord Calorne's choice, was so to Constance. But several reasons soon occurred to her, which made her doubt the propriety of encouraging him :—her situation was peculiarly unfavourable to him, and the apparent objections increasing both in number and magnitude, after having thought for about an hour on his letter with pleasure, she resolved that to avoid greater evils, it was prudent to refuse him : the discovery hurt her, considering it only as a request made by one whom she was solicitous to oblige, she felt great reluctance at saying what must be disagreeable to him, and above all she feared the loss of his regard.

She now stood in need of an able adviser, and would have imparted all her difficulties to Lady Maria in hopes of her assistance, had she not been so nearly concerned in her objections ; her equal relation to Lord Farnford and Lady Emma, rendered consulting her on the subject improper, as she had

had once shewn that her affection for her brother balanced her friendship for Constance, to decide against him must be painful, and advice of any other kind it could hardly be expected she would so far depart from her former sentiments and resolutions, as to give.

The first apprehension that arose in Constance's mind, was the danger to which Lord Calorne would be exposed from Lord Farnford, whom nothing would now convince that a refusal of him had not the foundation he suspected, and this part of her objection was strengthened by the consideration that her veracity would become questionable. The confidence which Lady Emma had reposed in her respecting Lord Calorne, was another reason for refusing him: though she blamed her forwardness, she pitied her, because she thought however injudicious her conduct, her affection was a tribute she was incapable of withholding from his merit, and she charitably believed that her not concealing it was owing to inability to assume a disguise: to receive Lord Calorne's addresses Constance well knew would be to inflict punishment on Lady Emma, and it carried the appearance of such a triumph over her as she scorned: she did not wish he should have Lady Emma, but she could not bear the thought of doing any thing that would occasion her such severe pain; her ladyship had manifested great kindness for Miss Fitz-

arthur

arthur, whose rectitude of mind taught her, that to repay her thus would be ingratitude.

What she should do after a resolution so formed, was much less difficult to determine than how to do it, so as to convince without offending Lord Calorne : this was the main point, a whole night's rumination was bestowed on it in vain, and she was obliged to refer all to the impulse of the moment when her answer should be required, with no other hope than, that as she should probably have some days to consider on it, she might at that time acquire the courage and address, which she could not be ignorant she then most lamentably wanted.

This hope she did not long enjoy : Lord Calorne mounted guard at St. James's in the morning, and after the relief called at Mrs. Stavenell's. Unfortunately for Constance, and most luckily for him, Mrs. Stavenell's fatigue the preceding evening kept her in her chamber ; and her niece had just sat down to breakfast alone in the parlour. As soon as the door was opened she heard Lord Calorne's voice ; he asked first for her aunt, and then inquired for her, and being told she was alone, he sent in to know if he might see her : the servant delivered his message, and Constance, who would have given the world to be relieved from a situation in which she feared she should acquit herself very awkwardly, desired he might be shewn in.

She.

She had so far collected herself as to receive him with apparent calmness, and told the servant to sent up word to Mrs. Stavenell, that Lord Calorne was come.—I beg, said he, that Mrs. Stavenell may not be disturbed : I only called in to ask after her and Miss Fitzarthur, and shall be very well satisfied with hearing of her.—The man went away to obey Miss Fitzarthur's directions, and she, dreading a pause, began a most *interesting* conversation on the weather, on the business from which his lordship was just come, on the engagement of the evening before, and on a variety of subjects equally important, which lasted till the messenger returned with an excuse from Mrs. Stavenell.

Lord Calorne and Constance sat down to breakfast together, and she soon found that her wishes and endeavours, to avoid the subject on which she was so ill prepared to speak, were equally inefficacious : she made the tea, and when they were alone, he said,—If I could have foreseen such an opportunity as Mrs. Stavenell's keeping her room has afforded me, I should have almost wanted an admissible excuse for troubling you with the letter I gave you last night : may I ask if you have opened it ?—Shall I put any cream in your tea ? said Constance.—I will save you the trouble, he replied, if you will answer my question.—I do not think the water has boiled, said she, rising to ring the bell.—The tea is very good,
Lord

Lord Calorne answered, stopping her, and it is a matter of very little importance whether the water has or has not boiled : you do not chuse madam, to answer me ; perhaps I am too precipitate : I did not mean to mention it to you so soon, but I cannot neglect such an opportunity : dispense with form, and tell me, have you read my letter ?—This was said too seriously to be any longer disregarded. Constance, distressed beyond imagination, coloured like scarlet : she tasted her tea, she sweetened it, filled it up with water, and poured cream into it till it ran over, before she could get courage to articulate a word.—I am afraid, said Lord Calorne, in a tone of raillery, I have spoiled your dish of tea—do not sweeten it any more ; but tell me whether you have found the five minutes leisure I asked for my letter.—I have, my lord, answered Constance, determined to conquer every thing that opposed her satisfying him : I have read it, and am very sorry you ever bestowed a moment's thought on the subject of it.—Why, Miss Fitzarthur ? said he.—I have many reasons for what I say, she replied, and to tell you ingenuously the truth, my disinclination to answer your question arises from the fear that in doing it I shall offend you.—He replied, that she had no reason for fear of that kind, and desired to know why she was sorry.—Because, said she, I see insuperable obstacles to your views.—Are they insuperable ? he asked.—They are indeed, returned

Vol. I. L Constance-

Constance, and for this reason I lament that you ever formed such an intention.—May I hear, said Lord Calorne, what your objections are?—I am sure you will on this occasion, as on all others, shew yourself superior to the world, and will allow me to judge of their force: I am hurt at seeing I embarrass you, but as you have now spoken on the subject; I beg you to tell me candidly, and without reserve, what are your *own* sentiments.—I will indeed, she answered, and I trust when you recollect the simplicity in which I have been educated, and how little opportunity I have had of learning to disguise my opinion, you will give what I say credit for sincerity.—I acknowledge that I think myself honoured by the contents of your lordship's letter, and that to make futile objections, or to raise imaginary difficulties would be to forfeit all pretensions to regard: the polite attention with which you have consulted my ease and interest deserves my thanks, and the fear that I appear ungrateful for the friendship you have shewn me, makes me reluctantly tell you, I can on no account accept your offer.—I thank you for your candour, said Lord Calorne, and cannot doubt your informing me on what your objections are founded:—tell me first, is Lord Farnford any obstacle? if I have been misinformed respecting him, I will immediately withdraw my pretensions.—Your information, she replied is true; finding he could not succeed with me, he unhandsoinely applied

applied to my father, and forced me very earnestly to beg that an end might be put to his importunity. —Where then, Lord Calorne asked, does the difficulty hinge?—My chief reason, answered Constance, for declining your offer is, that it is with respect to yourself improper: Lord Ormington's son should expect rank as well as fortune.—If this, madam, said he, is your *chief* objection, I protest it encourages me.—It will not, she replied, if it is understood as I mean it: surely you should look for, at least *equal* rank: there are many my superiors in that, as well as in other recommendations, to whom this proposal would, with much more propriety, and a better prospect of success be made.—Pray said Lord Calorne, will you favour me by telling me who has been your adviser in this business?—No body, I assure you, answered she, did you think the discovery above my sagacity?—No, he returned, but I will tell you honestly who I thought had counselled you.—I imagined you had applied to Lady Emma Peryton, and that these were *her* sentiments, for she is very fond of talking in this strain, and says much about *equal rank*, with a view I suppose to remind me of what lady is of equal rank with myself:—and now, pray Miss Fitzarthur tell me, has not what she has often said, suggested to you this wonderful idea of propriety?—No, really, said Constance; but I think such an offer made to her, would indeed be more fit. —I will use no disguise with you, rejoined his

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lordship;

lordship ; in this and all other respects I will deal frankly with you : I would not make such an offer to Lady Emma Peryton if I were sure that living secluded from society were the consequence of my refusing to do it ; the woman I marry I must esteem, and of that she has no idea. You shall know the history of my acquaintance with her, and you may then judge how far her rank is likely to attract me. Lord Farnford and I were fellow collegians, and during our stay at Oxford, he, by many acts of kindness, attached me to him : he introduced me to his sisters, and I became intimate in the family : as young men who have more spirits than prudence frequently are, I was caught by beauty and vivacity, and while I found my esteem and respect for Lady Maria's fine understanding increased daily, I was unawares captivated by Lady Emma : an acquaintance of a few months convinced me that a pretty face is no substitute for good sense, and that vivacity is a thin disguise for folly : I had cautiously avoided every thing that could be reasonably construed into attachment, having just wit enough to know, that to recede after a declaration would be cruel and dishonourable, and I soon rejoiced in having done so ; but immediately as I began to grow palled with the meagre diet of personal beauty, Lady Emma completed my emancipation, and what was till then only weariness, which a discovery of any intellectual attractions would have removed,

moved, she suddenly transformed into disgust which nothing could eradicate:—as I retired she advanced, and I too plainly saw the victory was mine before I had formed or intended a siege: a conquest so easily obtained, I, perhaps with too much haughtiness despised, and abhorring the baseness of deceiving, I by every means short of incivility, declared myself.—I am very sorry I have ever occasioned her any anxiety; it has been often hinted to me, and I believe neither she nor her friends chuse to understand me, however explicit I have been.

The objection with regard to Lady Emma was no longer, after so ingenuous a declaration to be urged; but Constance still adhered to the impropriety of his chusing one his inferior in rank: he told her that he disregarded this consideration.—But Lord Ormington will not, she replied.—I will do nothing without my father's approbation, said he, I am confident he will immediately see the advantages of such a proposal, and I heartily wish the determination were referred to him: let us consider this point as dismissed, and let me know the other impediments.—Our acquaintance is much too slight, she answered:—though it commenced some years ago, all that time which should have discovered our real dispositions passed without our meeting.—I will agree, said Lord Calorne, to any time of probation you think necessary:—we shall not know each other less, because we may in

L 3

future

future live together :—any more objections, Miss Fitzarthur ?—Yes, there is another, she replied, and a weighty one.—He begged to hear it, and promised, if it was reasonable to allow it.—To deal sincerely with you, said she, I am so far in Lady Emma Peryton's confidence that I am sure she would think my accepting your offer a breach of friendship ;—she would say I had betrayed and supplanted her, and I could not, though innocent, bear the suspicion.—Nor would I have you bear it, he replied ; surely we need not offend her, nor is it necessary that I should be punished for her gratification :—let what I have said be a secret from all here, I ask nothing more of you than leave to write to Sir Edward after I have heard from my father : neither of them will, if our wish that it should not be divulged is mentioned to them, thwart us ; and when you return to Marstonbury I will openly avow myself an authorized candidate for your favour.

Constance's objections were removed : the means Lord Calorne proposed to avoid giving Lady Emma offence would secure him from Lord Farnford's resentment ; he had ever been the object of her esteem ; she knew he stood well in the opinion of Sir Edward, and that he had always been a favourite with Lady Barbara ; and she felt in herself no inclination to refuse him : neither honour nor prudence required it, and she remained silent : she was above all hypocrisy, and when Lord Calorne pressed for leave to write to her father, she said that on condition

tion of his first obtaining Lord Ormington's consent, and if he would promise to refer the matter so entirely to him and Sir Edward that, in case of their disapprobation, the subject should never be mentioned:—here she paused: Lord Calorne asked no more; he complied with the terms, said he would write by the next post to his father, and that Constance should see and judge of his answer.

This arrangement was just made, and the matter fully discussed when Mrs. Stavenell came in.—For goodness sake, she exclaimed, what, at breakfast still?—why it's above an hour ago that I heard you was at it:—a fine gossiping meal truly!—why, my dear Constance, you told me the t'other day you never took above a quarter of an hour for your breakfast when you was alone.—We have breakfasted long ago, answered Lord Calorne:—the servant did not come for the tea things, and that is the reason we seem so tedious.—If I had known, continued Mrs. Stavenell as you wasn't neither of you in a hurry, I would have had mine with you.—I sent to you, Madam, her niece replied, when Lord Calorne came in.—Yes, my dear, said Mrs. Stavenell, I was told he called in to ask how we did, but I didn't know he had so much time to throw away.—His lordship now diverted the conversation, and having already staid to the extent of his leisure, though he could not go on Mrs. Stavenell's entrance without convincing her his visit was entirely to Miss Fitzarthur, took the first occasion to get away.

C H A P. XXV.

A C Q U I E S C E N C E .

THE ensuing week was productive of less uneasiness to Constance than any for some time had been, and one circumstance in it gave her great pleasure : she had a letter from Lady Reycolme informing her of her arrival at Paris, of her mother's being perfectly reconciled to her, and of her complete happiness : this to one so interested was a double gratification, as it by implication assured her that her renunciation of Lord Reycolme had been what she intended it, the promotion of his felicity.

Lord Calorne very prudently forbore seeing Miss Fitzarthur ; and Lord Farnford's behaviour gave her no uneasiness : she frequently met him, and saw him address every one in the company excepting herself, without feeling the least mortification : at the opera he would lean across her to speak to Mrs. Stavenell, and if he called at the house, he would not enter the room where Constance was ; but either sent in his message, or desired to speak with Mrs. Stavenell : if he dined there, he did not take the least notice of her, and if she called with her aunt on his sisters, when he happened to be with them, he left the room almost immediately

ately, and by every possible means endeavoured to show how highly he was offended; but Constance was neither picqued at his rudeness, nor willing to relax her severity. On such terms as these she could not be a frequent visitor at his house, nor ever a guest at his table. Lady Maria saw, and submitted to the necessity; and Constance always took care when Mrs. Stavenell was to dine at Lord Farnford's, either to invite some one of her acquaintance to spend the day with her or to engage herself out.

At the end of the week Lord Ormington's answer arrived, and Lord Calorne accidentally meeting Miss Fitzarthur in the mall as he was coming for a chance of seeing her alone at Mrs. Stavenell's, shewed it to her. It contained a queer kind of wonder that he should ask his consent to so eligible a match, and it did not express much parental care; but he promised compliance with his son's request that the matter might not be divulged; and it was an authority for his addressing Constance.

Lord Calorne then asked permission to write to Sir Edward Fitzarthur, and having obtained it, after a contest whether waiting till her return to Marltonbury were not the preferable measure, he, as if fearing she was not quite resolved, and might make new objections, engaged her in a conversation respecting Lord Farnford, which gave her an opportunity of asking from whom he had heard of the breach between them: she was surprised to learn

that it was from Mrs. Stavenell, and could scarcely think Lord Calorne serious, till he told her that the information was given him with a view to interest him for Lord Farnford, and that the circumstances were particularly enumerated that he might by the means used, judge of the violence of the passion that occasioned them.

In a few days Constance discovered that she was not so disinterested in this business as she had imagined : she grew anxious for Sir Edward's answer, and was obliged to prepare herself to receive it, supposing it should not be what Lord Calorne wished. Her suspense was of no long duration, the return of the post from Marstonbury brought her a letter from her father, in which he informed her of Lord Calorne's offer, and desired to know her sentiments on it immediately ; saying that as he had once been in danger of making her unhappy, he should be particularly cautious in this instance ; he added that he deferred writing to Lord Calorne till he hear'd from her, and that his conduct should be wholly regulated by her wishes. At the time when this very affectionate letter arrived, she was going out with Mrs. Stavenell for the evening:—the exigency suited her ; she availed herself of the excuse of a limited time, and said no more in reply than that she thought, implicit obedience was the least return she could make for his kindness, and that whatever her father thought proper, she would very readily acquiesce in.

There

There hardly now remained a doubt of what Sir Edward Fitzarthur would do; he professed himself ready to be guided by the inclinations of his daughter, and her referring all to him sufficiently evinced what they were, the only fear that Constance entertained was, that either Mrs. Stavenell or Lord Farnford's family might suspect Lord Calorne; and even this was rendered as light as possible by his guarded conduct: he continued his occasional visits in Portman-square and Spring-garden, and nothing in his behaviour ever indicated what had passed.

Sir Edward answered Lord Calorne's letter immediately after the receipt of his daughter's, and at the same time, sent one to her in which he told her he had given Lord Calorne every encouragement in his power, and that, as Lady Barbara joined him, the whole was referred back again to his dear Constance: he expressed in forcible terms his approbation of the proposal, and concurred in the wish that the transaction might remain a secret.

In the evening of the day which brought this letter, Lord Calorne called at Mrs. Stavenell's: Constance well knew the purpose of his visit, but there was a large party, and he had no opportunity of speaking to her: he contrived however before he went away to put into her hand Sir Edward's letter, which providing for her being engaged, he had inclosed in this from himself:

L 6

‘ Madam,

‘ Madam,

‘ Left I should not have an opportunity of seeing
‘ you alone this evening, I enclose Sir Edward Fitz-
‘ arthur’s letter, which I received by this day’s
‘ post :—it contains every thing my heart wished,
‘ and the very generous manner in which he has
‘ dispensed with those circumstances which I feared
‘ would oppose me, adds to the greatest obligations
‘ he could confer on me.

‘ Is it too much to say I now regard you as mine ?
‘ —excuse my presumption,—accept my sincere
‘ thanks for your very candid and ingenuous con-
‘ duct, and believe me, with the highest esteem and
‘ affection, Madam,

‘ Your devoted humble servant,

‘ CALORNE.”

The letter enclosed was this.

‘ My Lord,

‘ I have deferred acknowledging the honour of
‘ your letter no longer than till I could learn of
‘ my daughter whether I might safely follow my
‘ own inclination, thank you for the offer you have
‘ made her, and accept it. I have just received a
‘ very laconic epistle from her, the brevity of which
‘ says more for you than a folio sheet could ; she
‘ excuses herself for sending her acquiescence in
‘ whatever I chuse, by a necessity of going out im-
‘ mediately with her aunt ; but had she not readily
‘ acquiesced, I am satisfied no engagement would
‘ have

‘ have been thought of sufficient importance, to
 ‘ prevent her protesting against your application.
 ‘ She will say I have betrayed her to you ; but for
 ‘ leaving me to draw these conclusions, surely she
 ‘ only is to blame.

‘ The objections which you suppose I should
 ‘ make to you, are such as to a stranger I might
 ‘ have made : I should not indeed have chosen a
 ‘ soldier for my daughter’s husband, yet I could
 ‘ not think myself justified in refusing Lord Ca-
 ‘ lorne on that account. With respect to the dis-
 ‘ proportion of fortune you speak of, that concerns
 ‘ her only : if she can be happy with a narrow
 ‘ income, I am sure a large one would not make
 ‘ her more so.

‘ To the integrity and morality of your lordship’s
 ‘ character, I want no other testimony than the es-
 ‘ teem which some who know you think your due,
 ‘ and my own acquaintance with you : what you
 ‘ were, when you favoured us with your company,
 ‘ convinced me you would be what you are, and
 ‘ I can, with perfect confidence, commit to your
 ‘ care, her, in whom my every wish centers.

‘ Lady Barbara bids me express her satisfaction :
 ‘ she says this is an event which she had often,
 ‘ though hopelessly wished, and to see her daughter
 ‘ united to you, is the only desire she has remaining
 ‘ in this world.

‘ I am

“ I am happy in your having Lord Ormington’s consent, and in this occasion of subscribing myself .

‘ Your lordship’s very humble servant, .

• EDWARD FITZARTHUR.”

P. S. The time of my daughter’s return hither is uncertain : whenever she comes we shall hope to see you soon after.

C H A P. XXVI.

P A C I F I C A T I O N .

C O N S T A N C E ’s mind was now restored to its natural tranquillity, and she enjoyed as much happiness as human life is capable of affording. Lord Farnford played his haughty character upwards of three weeks, and then relaxing, prevailed on Lady Maria to negotiate a peace with Miss Fitzarthur ; he acknowledged his fault in endeavouring to avail himself of Sir Edward’s authority, and begged her forgiveness, with a promise that notwithstanding his love for her must ever remain undiminished, it should be productive of no uneasiness to her : he owned he despaired of success, but said he could with pleasure renounce all

all his hopes to obtain her good opinion : that the study of his life should be to deserve it, and that, when he forfeited it, he would not accuse her either of injustice or severity, but submit to her displeasure.

As Lady Maria seemed satisfied of the sincerity of these professions, Constance, whose temper was not formed for resentment, accepted the apology, and promised forgiveness and oblivion. Mrs. Stavenell saw this reconciliation with pleasure, and her niece lived on the same terms with Lord Farnford's family as before Lord Reycoln's return : she, however, still kept all that had passed with Lord Calorne profoundly secret, not so much from the fear of irritating his humiliated rival, as from kindness to Lady Emma, whose affection for her seemed every day to increase, and to whose peace of mind she could not bear to give such a wound, as this defeat of her fond hopes would prove. Lord Calorne's regard to Miss Fitzarthur's case took away all necessity of revealing it, he never paid more attention to her than to every other lady in company, and nothing, they both flattered themselves, could excite suspicion ; he never hazarded writing to her after Sir Edward's consent was obtained, nor did any person know of his application excepting the three consulted : he had given Constance his picture, but she was so cautious that she would not even risque carrying it about her.

Two

Two months she lived in this pleasant way ; she had every thing that could render her happy, and the prospect before her was of permanent felicity : beloved by one who so justly merited her regard, esteemed by her acquaintance, with no wish ungratified, no pleasure which she was capable of enjoying, out of her reach ; supported by conscious innocence and integrity, and thankful for having escaped the evils and miseries which had threatened her, she felt no concern, excepting that which occasionally excited sensibility, produced : she had every thing to hope, and nothing to fear. But the scene was soon to change ; she had reached the top of the pinnacle, she saw happiness before her, the full enjoyment of which is, for the wisest reasons, denied to mortality, and she must now descend and bid adieu to the tranquillity of mind, without which, pleasure loses its charms, with which, even misfortune is tolerable.

A very great alteration suddenly appeared in Lord Calorne ; his spirits were dejected, and something seemed to oppress his mind : the discovery was soon made by her so much interested in it, and she began to suspect he repented what he had done, yet nothing in his behaviour to her implied it, nor was it to be inferred from any circumstance that might not have arisen from indisposition : unwilling therefore to harbour an idea which impeached either his honour or his judgment, and which so warred against her own peace, she resolved to banish the suspicion and to seek by other means to account
for

for that which grew every day more obvious, and attracted the notice of several of his acquaintance.

He now embraced every opportunity of seeing her alone, and on such occasions his spirits would sometimes rise to their natural pitch; still, however, that something gave him uneasiness, was evident, and Constance imagined it must be some event in his family: she inquired after Lord Ormington, and learnt that he was arrived in town, and in good health; nothing appeared in that quarter that could cause this wonderful change: his sister she did not dare to name, as he had never mentioned her, and as this was the only point inaccessible to her curiosity, she supposed it was something respecting her: a few days made her doubt the validity of her conjecture, and fear that she herself was the cause she sought: he grew impatient for the time of her return to Marstonbury, and heard with apparent vexation that Mrs. Stavenell did not purpose leaving London till the latter end of July, by which time she expected her son would be at home, and that till then, Constance could not with propriety leave her, as her visit was to continue from her quitting the country for the winter, till she returned to it for the summer.

She sometimes hinted to Lord Calorne the alteration observable in him, he generally diverted the discourse, or, if he thought fit to answer her, it was in such a way as tended to confirm her suspicions that all was not right: at last he acknowledged

ledged that he was not in perfect health, that he had lost his appetite, and could not sleep, and put her off by saying, that if he was not soon better he would consult his physician.

One evening, a large party, which included Lord Farnford and his sisters, Lord Calorne, and many other young people met at Mrs. Stavenell's to go with her and her niece to Ranelagh; they went, and had been there about an hour when Lord Calorne complained of a pain in his head, and took his leave, saying, he would go home: soon after, Constance and her party, who imagined him gone, met him:—What, said Lord Farnford, not gone yet Calorne? I hope you have changed your mind, and that your head ach is better.—He replied, no, that his carriage was not there.—Then take mine, said Lord Farnford; I ordered my men to wait, for I didn't know how long I should stay, I am sure it is within call—take it and send it back. Lord Calorne said he would, and again went away—and again they met him.—Lord Farnford asked what new disappointment?—The company, answered he, are coming in very fast; I will take another turn with you, and then perhaps the door will be less crowded: he went on with them for a few yards, when somebody having trodden on Miss Fitzarthur's train and torn it, she stopped to get one of the ladies in company to pin it, and for this purpose, and that she might not be in the way, she retired out of the vortex, towards the boxes.

Lord

Lord Calorne who had staid with her, seeing this opportunity, put a letter, unobserved by any one else, into her hand, and immediately went out of the rotunda.

The felicity of the evening had been completely spoiled by his indisposition, and now she heartily wished herself at home to know the contents of his letter, which, from his mysterious behaviour she hoped would develop the secret she could not penetrate. It was near three in the morning before she could gratify her curiosity, and was then obliged to send her maid out of the room on some frivolous errand, or she must have kept her letter unopened till she rose. She impatiently, and yet fearfully broke the seal, and read these words :

‘ My dear Madam,

‘ Every effort I have made to tell you what it is now my intention to reveal has failed, and I am driven to the necessity of writing to you :— you say you cannot leave town till Mrs. Stave-
‘ nell goes, and that that will perhaps be towards the latter end of July. This is a long while for
‘ me to wait—a long while for chance or accident to reign.—I have a proposal to make to you, which
‘ would dispel in a great measure the gloom that hangs over me, and which is occasioned by a fear
‘ I cannot overcome, that by some misfortune or other I may lose you : if I could be certain that it
‘ would not offend you, I should without hesitation disclose my wish ; but remember I submit it to
your

‘ your judgment, and that, however it may bring
‘ mine in question, it is in itself innocent.

‘ Sir Edward Fitzarthur’s consent, and that of
‘ my father, you know have been without any diffi-
‘ culty obtained ; and I am allowed to hope that a
‘ short time after your return home will make you
‘ mine : a thousand things may yet intervene, and
‘ frustrate my expectations : I must endeavour to
‘ prevail on you, to put it out of the power of
‘ accident to do me this irreparable mischief.

‘ If you cannot quit London before Mrs. Sta-
‘ venell does, would you so far indulge me, and
‘ relieve my apprehensions, as to admit of an im-
‘ mediate private marriage ?—Is there not some
‘ one friend in whom you could confide, and at
‘ whose house I might some evening meet you ?—
‘ One hour is all I ask : surely you can steal that
‘ from your engagements. Give me your consent—
‘ name the person, and I will take the whole on
‘ myself. I am sure I might safely trust Mr.
‘ Metward, my father’s chaplain : he is too much
‘ attached to me either to refuse or betray me, and
‘ he, my dear Miss Fitzarthur, shall put an end
‘ to my anxiety.

‘ But this must be revealed to none but those on
‘ whom our success depends : neither your father
‘ nor mine must know it—we shall have no occasion
‘ ever to say any thing of it ; it will be no impe-
‘ diment to our formal marriage some months
‘ hence, and it would render me inexpressibly happy.

‘ I

‘ I know you will at first start at the proposition : an hour’s consideration will convince you
‘ it is neither criminal nor imprudent. Should you
‘ even think it right, after our avowed marriage to
‘ mention it to Sir Edward, I cannot believe he
‘ would blame it : he would see the motive to it,
‘ and would make allowances for my apprehen-
‘ sions.

‘ Let me beg you to think and to think *favour-*
‘ *ably* of it ; I am not superstitious, but I have some
‘ strange presentment about me, that unless we
‘ are thus immediately united, some fatal accident
‘ will separate us : this foreboding, your good sense
‘ may despise : I own it weakness, but it is a weak-
‘ ness I cannot conquer : when I face it, it flies
‘ me ; yet it returns, sleeping and waking with re-
‘ doubled force, and I can think of no way by
‘ which I can procure rest, excepting this which
‘ I propose to you.

‘ For the chance of seeing you alone I will call
‘ at Mrs. Stavenell’s to-morrow about your break-
‘ fast hour : if she is with you, my visit will be
‘ only a compliment to inquire after her and you :
‘ —if this obstacle is not in our way, I shall hope
‘ you will declare yourself ready thus innocently to
‘ gratify

‘ Your obliged, and very obedient

CALORNE.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXVII.

R E S O L U T I O N .

THE extraordinary request contained in this letter, alarmed Constance: what could be Lord Calorne's reason for making it?—it was on the face of it dishonourable, and if it was occasioned only by the fears he had described, his weakness was ridiculous: his prophecy was verified that the proposal would startle her, but not that an hour's consideration would make her think well of it; it had banished all inclination to sleep, and she pondered it incessantly till morning; not that so much time was necessary to frame her determination, which was immediately taken and adhered to; but her inability to account, in any satisfactory way, for what was so repugnant to her notions of honour, as so contrary to the principles on which she thought Lord Calorne acted, perplexed and disturbed her. A suspicion arose in her mind that he was jealous of her, notwithstanding she had in the whole of her conduct, considering herself as accountable to him, and rendered still more careful by a very sincere affection for him, been suspiciously anxious to avoid giving him uneasiness: motives of prudence, and a natural desire to shun evil, now aided the dictates of honour, and strengthened

ened a resolution, before inflexible, to refuse him. She wished, as much as he could, that Mrs. Stavenell might be absent when he came, for her resentment was excited, and she was desirous to depress his expectation as soon as possible.

They were gratified, Mrs. Stavenell on account of her late return from Ranelagh, kept her chamber till noon; and about ten Lord Calorne came: Miss Fitzarthur, not being in the parlour, was called, she immediately went down; the ghastliness of his countenance struck her; he was pale, his eyes sunk, and his whole person bespoke extreme indisposition: after having answered his queries respecting his getting home, she said, she hoped his quitting Ranelagh had cured his head-ach.—No, said he, it has been growing worse every hour: I foolishly took laudanum last night; and instead of making me sleep, it has kept me in horrors not to be described. This in some measure accounted for his looks; and Constance, fearing any misconstruction of her silence, began on the subject of the letter:—she asked him what had so lowered his opinion of her, as to suggest a belief that she would comply with his wish:—surely said she, Lord Calorne, you do not know what you have asked.—I know very well, he replied, what I have asked, and I know that my reasons for it are such as will support me; and I trust if you will dispassionately re-consider it, every objection will vanish.—And can your lordship think, said Constance

Constance, that I will re-consider a proposal in itself so dishonourable, and which is an infringement of my father's authority, could I return to his house, and expect and receive those instances of his kindness which are the rewards of obedience, at a time when I had dispossessed him of his power over me? suppose any thing were to happen to make it necessary for him to retract the consent he has given, and circumstances might occur, to which even *you*, might think it proper to submit, how must he blame me and I reproach myself for such inexcusable precipitation! I beg you will think no more of it, for I cannot.

Lord Calorne seemed bent on succeeding in his scheme, urging repeatedly his fear that some unforeseen accident might separate them: he found Miss Fitzarthur immovable; and not a little irritated at his making and persisting in so improper a request, the result of a pusillanimous dread of he himself knew not what, she replied to all he could say, that she never would consent to it, and that if the punishment of her obstinacy were to be their never meeting again, she would rather undergo it than the reproaches of her conscience.

The point was at length given up; breakfast was brought in, and Lord Calorne promised never again to mention the subject: he told her he honoured her firm adherence to what she thought right, though he might perhaps have cause to lament it: she, considering his fears as a part of, or
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at least occasioned by his present indisposition, said all she could to encourage him : she remarked to him how far short of his wishes her compliance in this particular would reach ; that it would only be to secure to themselves an alloy of every felicity, and how much better it was to trust to the dispensations of that providence whose protection they might be assured of while they rejected any irregular methods of obtaining his blessings, and whose care by the contrary they must inevitably forfeit. All she urged had little effect on Lord Calorne's spirits ; he yielded because she was resolute, but he did not appear convinced : he talked of the slenderness of the tie which held them, and how easily it was broken, when she, interrupting him said—Now I know the cause of your uneasiness, my lord ; I suspected it and it is confirmed.—The lividness of his countenance was for a moment changed to scarlet, and he hastily asked her what she suspected.—You cannot trust me, she replied.—Not trust you ? he repeated ; explain yourself, what do you mean by my not trusting you ? If what I said, answered Constance warmly, needs any explanation, it shall have it : you are jealous of me or you would not talk of the slenderness of the tie between us ; you are unsatisfied with my conduct, and have no confidence in me.—Lord Calorne for some moments sat silent looking steadfastly at her, and then said—If there is any one human failing which I am without, I can I think lay my hand

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on my heart and conscientiously say it is jealousy: how can you suspect me of it? or if you can suspect me, how can you imagine me jealous with respect to you, who have so uniformly convinced me that you are above all caprice, and scorned that pleasure, which so many of your sex value, of obtaining adulation by the mean arts of coquetry: so far I protest am I from being or having cause to be jealous of you, that I have often wondered how you could avoid the particular civilities offered you by others; I have felt grateful for the distinction, while I feared you would involve yourself in difficulties, and would have abated a little of the perfect security and repose I enjoyed, lest your scrupulous regard to it should make your situation embarrassing.—My suspicion may be unjust, Constance replied, but, said she smiling, if I did not hope that this disease of your mind, whatever it is, is removeable, I should be almost afraid to have any thing more to say to you:—are you subject to low spirited fits?—No, indeed, he answered, I never before felt any oppression like this that now hangs on me:—I will exert myself against it; it is weakness I own, and as such reprehensible: do not think that by seeing me as I am now you are gaining knowledge of my character, this is no part of it I assure you.—I will believe it, replied Constance, and I will attribute it wholly to ill-health. I really pity you, and would as far as is consistent with duty and propriety, relieve you.—You are
very

very good, said Lord Calorne, will you allow me to take advantage of your disposition? will you ratify your father's consent by your own promise, at present I have only your tacid acquiescence.—I do not understand you, she answered; the constant tenor of my actions, has, I think, been a sufficient ratification of what my father has done.—May I say, returned his lordship, that I have your promise.—You make me cautious, she replied, I am fearful of being betrayed to say more than I mean:—God forbid, interrupted he, that I should impose on you: I only wish to have it to say that we each rely on the word of the other. I am certain that a mind like your's will think itself as much obliged by a verbal contract unwitnessed, as a written one executed with the proper forms; all I ask is an assurance from you that you will accept me for your husband, and consent to be my wife.—As far as I have power, said Miss Fitzarthur, I engage myself to you.—And I, continued he, solemnly promise in the sight of God, conscious that he both hears me and knows the sincerity of my heart, that no earthly consideration shall prevail on me to give you up, but that with your consent, I will marry you.

Lord Calorne now seemed satisfied, : and Constance ventured to ask him what particular accidents they were which his present low state of spirits made him fear; when they were interrupted by the sudden bursting open of the room door, and the

M 2

immediate

immediate entrance of Lady Emma Peryton.—Miss Fitzarthur's surprise was not to be concealed, nor her apprehensions repressed that her ladyship had listened to their conversation ; yet, as nothing in her appearance betrayed it, and she was in high good humour, it was no more than a possibility.—Now, said she, darting into the middle of the room, I have caught you : the street door was open, and I was determined to make you jump ; so I wou'dn't send in my name ; but, continued her ladyship, assuming an air of reserve between jest and earnest, I did not know who was with you, or I wou'dn't have done so.—Constance very readily forgave the intrusion, and as Lady Emma had always a large portion of gossiping time, Lord Calorne took his leave, apparently vexed at her *mal-a-propos* visit.

The gloom on his mind was, when they next met, a little dispelled ; and there was reason to hope it was gradually wearing off : she saw with pleasure that he strove against it, and therefore forbore gratifying her curiosity by repeating the question to which Lady Emma's unexpected entrance had prevented his answering : that he was not so chearful as he had been, gave her occasional uneasiness, though she flattered herself a restoration of his health, which mended very slowly, would entirely remove his dejection.

C H A P. XXVIII.

C O M M U N I C A T I O N.

ONE evening when Mrs. Stavenell was engaged from home, and when Lord Farnford, his sisters, Lord Calorne, and some other young friends, were with Miss Fitzarthur at tea in the drawing-room, a message was brought to her from a lady, who waited in the parlour, and wished to speak with her; she desired she might be shewn up stairs.—The lady wants to see you in private, ma'am, was the answer. Constance could not guess who could have any private business with her; the servant said he did not know the lady, that she had a little child with her, and came without a servant in a hackney coach. She sent down word that she would wait on the stranger in a few minutes; and getting Lady Maria Peryton to take her place at the tea-table, she went, with no small degree of curiosity, to the parlour; the lady, who had risen on her entrance, was a person she could not recollect ever having seen; she looked like a woman of fashion, was in a very elegant undress, the beauty of her face, though under a large bonnet, could not pass unnoticed, and she had with her a little boy, who appeared to be between two and three years old.

M 3

Constance

Constance addressed her, and desired to know her business with her.—You are Miss Fitzarthur, I presume, replied the stranger—I have a favour to ask of you, madam, which——here she stopped, and seemed much embarrassed. Constance begged her to compose herself, and said she would attend to any request she had to make.—She again attempted to proceed;—I am informed, madam, that you are shortly——here she hesitated, grew more agitated, and burst into tears. Constance was all astonishment, and could not conceive what sort of distress excited such emotions:—She endeavoured to encourage her, and offered to ring for a glass of hartshorn and water; this the lady declined, saying, she should recover in a few minutes. To avoid distressing her, Miss Fitzarthur now directed her attention to the child, whose countenance prejudiced her in its favour, and he returned her caresses with fondness; in a short time she was relieved from her suspense, the lady recovered the free use of her tongue, and said,—You are very good, madam, to take notice of my little boy; it is on his account and his sister's that I trouble you; it is for them that I ask a favour of you.—I understand that you are shortly to be married to Lord Calorne.—Constance was thunder-struck; but recovering from her surprize, she, with some hesitation, assured her her information was premature; she would have proceeded, had not the stranger interrupted her by saying,—Although
my

my information may be *premature*, madam, it is not *erroneous*, it is sufficient for me that such a match is in contemplation, and this I am sure you will own.—Here she stopped as if expecting Constance's assent, but she, too much embarrassed to say a word, only coloured. I see, madam, continued the lady, I have displeased you by the abruptness of my application; I am very sorry for it, for I had no intention of offending you; that I may not detain you, I will tell you my business as briefly as possible. I heard by accident a short time ago, that my lord had thoughts of marrying, and on inquiry, I found you were the lady he addressed; at the same time such a character of you was given me as encouraged me to ask you to plead the cause of two helpless infants; this child, madam, is lord Calorne's,—and I—O how can I look at you and own it!—I am its unhappy mother.

At this information Miss Fitzarthur trembled universally, and was silent, till summoning her fortitude and her presence of mind to disguise her interest in it, she said that lord Calorne could not then be at liberty to marry. O madam, replied the stranger, I should be very sorry to prevent his marriage;—he is quite at liberty. I never wished him to remain single on my account, for he has assured me he never will abandon me.—This Constance considered as little short of an insult; it was plainly telling her she was to *share* Lord Ca-

lorne's affection ; and she was in doubt whether she should not decline hearing the remainder of this story ; yet there appeared in the relator, such an artless simplicity, such a fear of offending, and such distress, that she could not resolve on dismissing her without knowing if it was in her power to serve her.—What I have to request of you, madam, said the stranger, is, that when you are married you would represent to my lord the propriety of making a permanent provision for his children, for I have a girl younger than this child : this I am not so anxious for ; his sex makes a provision less necessary ; but for my girl something should be done, for indeed, madam, ill as you may conceive of me, it would break my heart to have her exposed to the temptations her mother yielded to : if she is secure from poverty, I hope she will be safe : as for myself I have nothing to ask ; my lord's generosity has placed me above all fear of want, and I do not doubt he will be as kind to his children ; but my anxiety makes me very earnestly wish for a certain provision for them : will you, madam, now you have been so good as to hear me, will you take the trouble of mentioning my request to my lord as soon as you can after you are married ?

The whole of Miss Fitzarthur's resentment was now awakened against Lord Calorne, and his urgency for a private marriage was explained. This was in her opinion so infamous a connection as
entirely

entirely to forbid all farther intercourse with him ; the respect she had entertained for him now vanished, and was succeeded by abhorrence of his libertinism, and anger at his attempt to impose on her by the appearance of strict morality : she replied with some warmth—Were I capable of marrying Lord Calorne after what I have heard of him, I should deserve and expect all the contempt he could treat me with :—In that case, however, I would most willingly remind him of his duty to his children, but I consider him as already married : in the sight of Heaven he certainly is so ; I will never rob another of their right, nor can I content myself with his lordship's superfluous affection.—I must then beg, said the stranger lady, that if you break with my lord, he may not know of my application ; he would never forgive my being the occasion of losing you.

A pause now brought to Miss Fitzarthur's recollection that she was giving implicit faith to assertions which, however bold, might be false, as she knew not what credit was due to her informer ; she, however, promised that the confidence she reposed in her should not be rendered injurious to her, and expressed her astonishment that she had been so deceived in Lord Calorne,—O madam, said the lady, with a half smile, you know but little of the world, or you would not think so badly of my lord ; indeed when first I lived with him I used to call him very wicked to have enticed me

M 5

from

from home, because it broke my poor mother's heart ; for I assure you till I knew Lord Calorne, though I was poor, I was respected.—The arts, replied Constance, which he must have used to insnare you add to his wickedness : I can make allowances for young women where their situations in life expose them to the arts of those whose powers of temptation can be extended to any difficulty they meet with, and they are sincerely to be pitied—how long have you known Lord Calorne ? —I knew him first, said the stranger, a short time before he went abroad—this child was born while he was gone ; he wanted to persuade me to come to him, but my mother was living, and as I was with her, she hoped our connection would be broken.

It appeared very incredible to Constance that Lord Calorne's character should be so ill understood, considering he had so early discovered his inclinations ; all his acquaintance regarded him as an uncommonly good young man, and that he should be able to deceive the world effectually, while such corrections of their judgment as his children exhibited, was to her matter of so great astonishment as induced her to believe herself imposed on by this relation : unwilling, however, to appear interested by asking such questions as might either remove or confirm her suspicions, she said that if she found Lord Calorne the man he was represented, her acquaintance with him would immediately cease ; and she

she must therefore decline all interference in his family affairs.

The stranger perceiving she had withheld her belief, and seeming piqued at her incredulity, replied—Do you say, madam, if Lord Calorne is the man represented? do you doubt what I have told you? you do, and I cannot wonder at it. The loss of credit is but the consequence of the loss of innocence, though indeed I am not the abandoned creature you think me: if you could spare me half an hour I would convince you I erred from weakness not inclination. Constance, though she could very ill stay, could not forbear wishing to know what degree of credit was to be given to imputations which so nearly concerned her: she therefore sent to the company above stairs an excuse for her absence, and a request to Lady Maria to supply her place till her return; and then listened to such a series of deceit and villany exercised to intrap a poor unwary girl as called forth equally her pity and her anger.

When the lady had ended her story, Constance, who felt much interested for her, expressed her abhorrence of Lord Calorne's conduct; and acknowledged her confidence in him was shaken; still, however, unwilling to condemn him, she said she would inquire of some of his friends, lest there should be any mistake in names or circumstances; and if, continued she, I find, what I can hardly doubt you have told me confirmed, will

you give me leave to excuse the necessary alteration in my behaviour, by owning I have seen you?—No, replied the lady, I cannot consent to it; he would never pardon it: I can, I believe spare you the trouble of inquiry, for I have a letter in my pocket from him: you know his hand I suppose.—Constance answering in the affirmative, she took out a number of letters, one of which she gave her to read, and it contained these words:

‘I own, my dear Maria your reproaches are
 ‘just, the letter you refer to is three weeks old,
 ‘and yet unanswered; but I will not admit the
 ‘inference you draw from my neglect:—let the en-
 ‘closed be a peace offering, and rest assured you
 ‘are as dear as ever to

Your most faithful and affectionate

C A L O R N E.

‘P. S. Kiss your little boy for me.—Metward
 ‘says he grows very much like me:—a little tell-
 ‘tale! but I love him and his mother too well to be
 ‘displeased at the discovery. I have long surmount-
 ‘ed vulgar prejudices, and care little for the opi-
 ‘nion of the world.’

So absolute a confirmation left no room either to hope or doubt: the letter was signed, and the whole of it written by Lord Calorne, and addressed to Miss Greyburne: Miss Fitzarthur now looking at the child, fancied she saw the mentioned resemblance; and borne down by such a torrent of evidence she was lost in amazement. The lady took her leave,
 and

and Constance summoned all her fortitude to return to the company : as she was going into the hall, she saw a letter lying on the floor, which she picked up, and finding it to be that which Miss Greyburne had shewn her, as it was impossible to return it, put it into her pocket and went to the drawing room. When the door was opened, Lady Emma coming up to her, exclaimed—Lord my dear, where have you been this age?—I assure you if I hadn't heard it was a lady that wanted you I should have thought you'd been gone off: I was just coming to see after you:—why my dear you look very pale—what's been the matter?—who have you had with you?—come tell me, for I am dying with curiosity.

The quick succession of Lady Emma's questions took away all necessity of answering them; and Constance said only that she was not very well, and sat down on the nearest chair. One of the ladies was at the harpsichord, and several of the company were standing round her, but all were now either alarmed for Miss Fitzarthur, or anxious to know what was the matter: they therefore quitted the harpsichord and came to her. Lady Maria thinking the heat of room was too great, said, she would be better in the air, and desired one of the sashes might be opened: this was immediately done by Lord Farnford, and Lord Calorne offered to move her to the window: the sight of him, who was the
sole

sole cause of her indisposition, reanimated her ; she declined his assistance, and went towards the air, where she presently recovered. Some reason must now be assigned both for her stay and her disorder : the true one was of all the most improper ; she therefore said, that the person to whom she had been called had been telling her a very melancholy story.—A widow and half a dozen fatherless children, with a tale made up to draw the money out of your pocket, I conclude, interrupted Lord Farnford.—Well ! said Lady Emma, I'm surprised how people can please themselves with hearing melancholy tales ; when any body comes to me with a pitiful story I always desire 'em to hold their tongues, for I've no idea of making one self miserable for misfortunes one don't feel.—Lord Calorne smiled at her ladyship contemptuously, and said to Miss Fitzarthur—I hope the distress you have honoured with your compassion was such as you could alleviate, then I am sure you will rejoice in having suffered by hearing it.

Constance, who an hour before would have listened eagerly to Lord Calorne, and whose eyes would have declared how sincerely she concurred in every wish for the happiness of others, now turning from him, answered coldly :—From what I have heard I could derive no pleasure, nor no advantage, excepting that of learning to distrust, not only all the world, but my own senses. This answer was too mysterious to gratify the curiosity of

of her hearers : Lord Farnford, who from the mist in which the object was enveloped, exaggerated its magnitude, after a pause coming from the fire to Miss Fitzarthur, said—I will lay five to nothing I guess what sort of a visitor you have had.—There is something, replied Lord Calorne, interrupting him, so very unfair in attempting to extort what another is desirous to conceal, that, were I Miss Fitzarthur, however secure I might be of your guessing wrong, I would not allow you to exercise your ingenuity.—Constance fearing Lord Farnford should say any thing that might again disorder her, and scarcely able to recollect what she herself had said, answered, that a recital of misfortunes could not afford pleasure, nor did she think them subjects of conversation.—Lady Maria agreed with her : Lady Emma said, there were things enough to make us uneasy in this world without our seeking for them : and here, as curiosity was out of hope of being gratified, inquiry ceased.

C H A P. XXIX.

DETERMINATION.

AS soon as the company were gone, Constance retired to her chamber, too much occupied by what she had learned to wish to meet her aunt, and

and desirous to avoid inquiries which she could not so easily have parried as those she had been teased with: she passed a sleepless night in comparing the several circumstances of Lord Calorne's behaviour to her, with Miss Greyburne's story, and the correspondence between them tended to confirm that which was already too certain: the fear that this connection should come to her knowledge accounted in some measure for his dejection, and fully explained his proposing a clandestine marriage; a snare which she most heartily rejoiced at having escaped. One thing only was inexplicable; that all his acquaintance should either be ignorant of his character, or join to conceal it: this staggered her, for had Lady Maria known it, she would not have been so lavish in her commendations of him; had Lord Farnford known it, the wish, while he suspected her attachment to him as the cause of her refusal, to lower him in her opinion, and his desire to convince her that he himself was not a prodigy of immorality, would she was certain, have overcome every consideration of friendship or charity: she therefore could only conjecture that this was a secret, and that Lord Calorne had successfully imposed on the world. In proportion as her regard for him was sincere, she was grieved at his depravity, and her indignation was roused at his consummate hypocrisy. We are never more angry than when we find ourselves duped, natural justifiable pride, and self love, aid better reasons, and
we

we can sooner forgive any injury than that of deceit.

What step she should take in consequence of this discovery, in her present agitated state of mind she could not resolve: there was but one thing on which she would immediately decide, and that was never to be the wife of such a man. In the morning she most unwillingly obeyed a summons to the breakfast table, where she found Mrs. Stavenell, who on her entrance expressed her concern and astonishment at the alteration in her looks.—Do I look worse than usual? said Constance, going to the glass—yes I do, I look pale, but it will go off.—You went to bed soon last night, replied her aunt, your maid said you seemed poorly.—I was very low in the evening, answered Miss Fitzarthur, hardly knowing how to get rid of these troublesome inquiries.—I believe the room was too hot.—If you ar'n't well, said Mrs. Stavenell, I'll send for advice; I shall have you laid up else.—Her niece begged her not, assuring her she was quite recovered, and they sat down to breakfast: a dish of tea was all Constance could swallow: and Mrs. Stavenell insisted on her being worse than she owned, and proposed sending for her physician, which, however, her niece prevented by saying—I know what I should be told—that I must leave off raking, for that late hours, and sudden transitions from heat to cold will ruin any constitution: if you please, she continued, I will be good and keep
house

house this evening, and I shall be quite well to-morrow.

At noon Lord Farnford called to inquire after her, and presently after Lord Calorne : Constance could not avoid appearing; and was comforted by Lord Farnford's presence; which had ever been a restraint, as well on Lord Calorne as on herself : it was impossible to behave with ease : her colour went and came, and her disorder was visible : she was least reserved and embarrassed to him she had uniformly disliked ; more so to him who till the preceding day had been the object of her esteem. Lord Calorne's countenance plainly indicated his perceiving this change, it expressed a resentment of it, and when he had satisfied himself about her health, and made some fruitless efforts to engage her in conversation, which she laconically repelled, he withdrew. She felt relieved by his absence, and dreading nothing so much as again exciting Mrs. Stavenell's suspicions, she joined her in a request to Lord Farnford that he would go with them to Christie's : his lordship, not a little elated by this unprecedented mark of favour, willingly acceded to this proposition. Mrs. Stavenell was engaged abroad for the evening, and out of kindness to her niece, who purposed staying at home, she asked Lord Farnford if his sisters would come and sit with her : he undertook for them that they should, and said he would accompany

accompany them; a civility which Constance would very readily have dispensed with: she could not decline it, and therefore strengthened her aunt's invitation by telling him, that if the ladies would come they would practise some music which had that morning been sent to her: she hoped this employment would divert their attention from her, and supply her deficiency in conversation.

Notwithstanding Miss Fitzarthur was well aware of the propriety of immediately informing Sir Edward and her mother of the discovery she had made, it was a measure to which she had so many objections that she could not resolve on it: it would oblige her to give up her author, and this the fear of involving Miss Greyburn in difficulties forbade; Sir Edward would without doubt inform Lord Calorne of the reasons which forced him to depart from his promise, and perhaps she might be required to confront him; besides the idea of being made the subject of conversation, as he would be no longer solicitous to keep what had passed secret, and might through resentment and revenge expose her, was too disagreeable to be risked. In order therefore, to avoid this and the pain of verbally accusing him, a task which though she abhorred his vices, she still had too much regard for him to think herself adequate to, and to screen Miss Greyburne from the effects of his anger, she determined to keep what she had heard within her own breast, to avoid seeing Lord Calorne, to leave London as soon as she

she could find a pretext for it ; and, when at Marstonbury, to acquaint Sir Edward and Lady Barbara with his conduct.

A habit early imbibed of sacrificing every inclination to the sense of rectitude enabled her to make this heroic resolution, but it was not sufficient to support her under it : the disappointment she had experienced preyed incessantly on her spirits, and notwithstanding the utmost exertion of her fortitude it visibly impaired her health : she had, without effect, hinted to Mrs. Stavenell her wish to return to the country ; her aunt was not to be persuaded that it would be of service to her, and would not hear of it : the fear of marring her project by pressing it too far made her cautious ; when it was violently opposed, she desisted ; but always renewed the subject at the next opportunity. A week she dragged on in this uncomfortable way, without any other consolation than that she did not see Lord Calorne : his uncommon long absence from Mrs. Stavenell's, and her not having met him in that time any where, made her suspect he knew the discovery she had made, and had withdrawn himself ; but this she found it difficult to believe : sometimes she persuaded herself she had been imposed on by Miss Greybourne's story ; but his letter to her was incontrovertable evidence : she was forced to abandon every hope, and to acknowledge, that however ill she had thought of Lord Farnford, Lord Calorne

Calorne was not only his equal in vice, but his superior in hypocrisy.

That she might not render her task more difficult than it really was, she avoided every occasion of indulging the melancholy which already nearly overpowered her : she gave up the pleasure of solitude, and forced herself to dress and go into company, when neither her spirits nor strength were equal to the fatigue : the society of Lady Maria Peryton was now too much like remaining alone ; she preferred Lady Emma's vivacity, as that for a moment made her forget what she was too prone to think on ; but these apostrophies afforded her no permanent relief, every painful remembrance returned as soon as she was alone with added strength.

She had promised one evening when she had met Lady Emma at the opera, to be ready at noon the next day to walk with her : they went together to the reservoir in the Green Park, and were by the water side when her ladyship suddenly stopping, and looking at her watch, recollected an engagement she had made to call on a lady in Clarges-street at that hour : she said she should not be gone ten minutes, and wished Constance to wait where she then was for her. As each had a servant with her, there was no impropriety in this, and Miss Fitzarthur agreed to walk there till she returned : in a few minutes, as Constance was indulging the privilege of being alone, and ruminating on the arguments

arguments she should next use to prevail on Mrs. Stavenell, she heard the gate from the Queen's-walk fall to, and lifting up her eyes saw Lord Calorne who had just ascended the hill, accompanied by Mr. Metward his father's chaplain, whom she had once before seen, and who was the person proposed by him, as he could trust, to perform the ceremony of their clandestine marriage:—she involuntarily stooped, and would have gone out at the nearest gate, had it not been for her expectation of Lady Emma: she therefore only turned back, and hoped Lord Calorne and his companion would go through to Piccadilly: in this she was deceived, they followed her, and when come up with her, Lord Calorne said,—Good morning to you, Madam—what here alone?—She returned his salutation as briefly as possible, and answered that she waited for Lady Emma who had just left her.—Lord Calorne paused, and then, looking full at her, said,—I am very sorry to see Miss Fitzarthur here without company;—touched his hat, passed her, and went towards the grove.

It was upwards of half an hour before Lady Emma came back, and Constance had time for reflection on the alteration in Lord Calorne's behaviour, and the manner in which he had spoken to her: it was so different from his usual mode of address, and he so emphatically said he was sorry to see her there without company, that she was at a loss to understand him. As she again passed the gate through

through which he went, she saw him and Mr. Metward walking very closely, and Lord Calorne looked back every four or five steps: what the mystery of his conduct meant she could not find out. It was evident that something had wrought a great change in him; at any other time he would have joined her, now, notwithstanding he professed himself sorry to see her alone, he quitted her: she was for a moment hurt at the sight, but when she considered that a breach between them was necessary and inevitable, she endeavoured to reconcile herself to it, and again to persuade herself that it was the consequence of his knowing the discovery Miss Greyburne had made.

When Lady Emma returned she asked Constance if she had had no company: she replied that she had not, that Lord Calorne had passed her, and had scarcely stopped: her ladyship seemed surprised, and so unwilling to believe that he had staid no longer, as convinced Constance she suspected a greater intimacy between them than was avowed; but hearing that Mr. Metward was with him: she seemed satisfied.

C H A P. XXX.

S U P P O S I T I O N .

SOME young friends of Miss Fitzarthur's had invited her to spend the next evening with them in Pall-mall ; there was a large company, and when the card-players were seated, Constance, the young ladies of the house, and some others went towards the windows, which were yet open : they had stood a few minutes when their attention was drawn by a light in the street : it was a chariot with a flambeau, and, as soon as it came in sight, one of the ladies of the family said,—Here's this smart chariot that comes every day : I wonder whose it is.—It now stopt at the opposite house, and Constance plainly saw it was Lord Calorne's : he got out of it and went into the drawing-room, the window shutters of which were also open : there was only one lady sitting in the room, and she was reading till the carriage came ; she then had laid by her book, and when Lord Calorne entered received him with much seeming joy : the curtains were immediately let down, and no more was to be seen. The curiosity of Constance had been so excited, and she was so wholly engrossed by what she saw, that she remained silent ; but now, as the ladies were still conversing on the subject of this unknown chariot

chariot, and saying how often it came, and that the lady they had seen had the frequent use of it, she told them whose it was, and asked who lived at the house.—That replied the young lady, I cannot find out: it seems to be a sort of secret, and I have a great notion it is a kept mistress: the house is ready furnished, and this lady has been there about ten days; she is a very pretty woman; they say her name is Graham, or something like it, and would persuade us that her husband is in the country; this chariot comes every day, and very often the gentleman who got out of it comes on foot, dressed in regimentals; at other times it is sent, and the lady goes out with her child. From this account it was no unjustifiable surmise that the Lady was Miss Greyburne, and Constance could scarcely conceal her interest in what she had seen.

The young lady who had first started the question now said to another at a card-table near her,—Miss Fitzarthur knows whose carriage that is that I shewed you this morning;—she says it is Lord Calorne's.—What, returned the lady, Lord Ormington's son?—why that's he that's going to be married.—Constance was ready to die at this information; she retired to a chair behind her, and prepared to hear news of herself.—And who is he going to be married to? said the curious impertinent.—Who played that diamond?—the spade was your's—the trump was mine—were the only answers she could for some time get: at length a deal interposed, she repeated

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her question, and the lady answered :—He is going to have Miss Ecklew.—Why I thought, replied the inquirer, she was to have had Colonel Derville.—Yes, so it was imagined, the other answered, but it is not to be so : they say the match is concluded on between Lord Ormington and Mr. Ecklew.—I'm sure I pity her from my heart, for I know she dos'nt like Lord Calorne, at least she likes her colonel much better :—I saw her this morning, and she told me if her father insisted on it, it would break her heart.—But surely said a gentleman at the table, if Lord Calorne was aware of this he would refuse her.—Not he, I dare say, replied Miss Ecklew's friend :—I suppose he has a mind to her fortune, which was left her by her aunt on condition she marries to please her father, and is very well worth his having : it is said to be in order to avoid paying a considerable gaming debt due to Mr. Ecklew, whose estate being like Lord Ormington's a little out at elbows, makes him clamorous, that this match was proposed.

All the particulars of this business were communicated, the hearers were satisfied, and Constance secretly rejoiced in their misinformation. But it presently occurred to her that what she had heard might be true, and this might account for the oddity of Lord Calorne's behaviour : the authority on which the lady spoke was indisputable, as she asserted having her information from Miss Ecklew herself, and as Lord Calorne had in one instance attempted

attempted imposition, it was not impossible that he might in another effectually deceive her. This imagination wrought so forcibly on her mind that it was with the utmost difficulty she kept up any tolerable degree of chearfulness through the evening: when she got home, she resolved, at all events, the next day to mention seriously to Mrs. Stavenell her desire to return to Marstonbury: she did so, urging as a reason for it the decline of her health; and obtained a promise from her that if she was not soon better, she would not oppose her following her inclinations.

Lady Emma Peryton had engaged Miss Fitzarthur to breakfast with her and Lady Maria the next morning, and, it being very fine weather, she was to walk, as was her usual custom when she went to Portman-square, through Hyde-park, and Mrs. Stavenell said, she would either call or send the coach for her. As soon as Constance had crossed the road in Hyde-park, she saw Lord Calorne coming slowly down the Walnut-tree-walk; he stopped and then went off to the left: as he was at a considerable distance, she hoped she should be able to avoid him by turning out of the track: but when she had gone a few yards farther, he came up to her, and with a stern voice and countenance asked her why she came there:—she was disconcerted by seeing him, surprized at his question, and still more at the manner in which it was put; she answered it by repeating it, and saying she was going

to Portman-square.—And why, Miss Fitzarthur, said he, would you come this way?—you do not, surely, see your danger.—What danger? returned she terrified :—I am sorry I came this way if it is dangerous.—Did I not tell you, said he, I honoured your firmness?—what will your father think?—he little knew what he did when he suffered you to come to London :—he had better have immured you all your life where you were;—but it makes very little difference,—nothing would have been a restraint :—I shall say no more to you :—you have made me miserable,—leave this place I beg ;—do not stay in it.—What would I not give I had been disappointed!—go out of the park as fast as you can.—For heaven's sake, said Constance, what do you mean?—what danger am I exposed to?—what have I to fear?—you have terrified me so I scarcely know which way to take—if you will walk to Piccadilly with me I will send the man immediately to call a coach.—I walk back with you? replied Lord Calorne—this is confirmation :—Miss Fitzarthur, I respect your family—I love you—and I have not lost all sense of honour. Saying these mysterious words, with a look still more calculated to embarrass, he left her, and struck across towards Kenfington-garden.

Half dead with fear and surprize Constance knew not whether to return or proceed : her servant had waited at a distance while Lord Calorne spoke to her, and seeing her now stand still, he came up to her

her: she went forward, and nothing appearing to excite her apprehensions; and many people being dispersed about the park, a few moments consideration inclined her rather to think his lordship out of his senses than that there could in such a place be any danger from which her servant was not a protection; she therefore continued her walk, and reached Portman-square without any reason to credit the unintelligible warning.

When she went in at Lord Farnford's, her countenance declared that something uncommon had disturbed her: she asked to have a little water, and then related as much of her *rencontre* as she thought prudent. Lady Maria was equally at a loss, and as much astonished as herself. Lady Emma laughed at it, and said Lord Calorne had a mind to frighten her: Lord Farnford, who came in soon after her, and to whom the circumstances of the affair were by his younger sister, repeated, insisted on it that Lord Calorne was either drunk or mad: the latter Constance was inclined to believe, the former she thought as improbable as Lady Emma's suggestion that it was done to frighten her. In the course of conversation on the subject, the alteration in Lord Calorne's behaviour, and the dejection of his spirits were observed on; and Lord Farnford, in a way between jest and earnest, said,—I would lay a thousand to one that I can account for this oddity.—How? said Lady Emma—Calorne's in love, replied his lordship: Miss Fitzarthur do

you know no lady of whom he is most passionately fond, though neither he nor she chuse to own it?—The question so disconcerted her to whom it was addressed and who saw how it was aimed, that she could very ill dissemble; but lady Emma cruelly pressing her to answer, she replied that she had heard that he was paying his court to Miss Eckleu. And pray, said Lord Farnford, rising and placing himself directly before her, do *you* believe it?—I had it from what I thought good authority; but I told my informer I should give no credit to it, till I had asked you; because you were so much interested in it, and it would occasion such an alteration in the arrangement of your affairs, that you must, if it were true, know of it.—Never had Constance suffered any thing equal to what she felt now.—Lady Maria saw and would have relieved her distress, had not Lady Emma repeated her brother's question:—determined, by her obstinate perseverance that she should not have the victory, she exerted herself, and replied that she believed the report as much as she believed others in general of that kind, though it might be true for aught she knew, and that from the positive manner in which it was asserted, it could hardly be doubted.—The looks of Lady Emma and her brother convinced Miss Fitzarthur they were no strangers to Lord Calorne's attachment to her, and having reason to suspect his honour, she concluded he had broken his word, and disclosed what she wished to conceal:
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else how should Miss Greyburne, how should Lord Farnford's family know so much.

Unhappy in herself, miserable in solitude, and yet scarce able to bear the fatigue of company, Constance heartily repented having made the engagement at Lord Farnford's, and resolved never again to seek an alleviation of her melancholy in a remedy still worse than the disease. That she had lost all her vivacity had been for some time observed by her acquaintance, and Lord Farnford joined by his younger sister, most unmercifully rallied her for it, attributing it avowedly to Lord Calorne, and telling her that however cunning she might be, she could not blind all the world. At last Mrs. Stavenell called her, and Constance whose desire to return to Marstonbury increased every hour, quitted Lord Farnford's house, with a determination to pay only one other visit there, and that it should be for the purpose of taking a farewell.

Amidst all her vexations she could not but think herself fortunate in being free from Lord Calorne's visits: an interview which should oblige her to converse with him, would, she frequently thought, be more than she could endure. For some days after Miss Greyburne had been with her, she was in perpetual fear of his coming, or meeting him where she went; but excepting the morning when he called to inquire after her, and her seeing him twice when she walked, her fortitude had escaped a trial of this sort, and her dread ceased to exist. She

could not doubt his having discovered that his character was developed, nor that for this cause he avoided her; but his conduct seemed always intended to defeat her sagacity, and to puzzle her: She had just returned from Lord Farnford's, and was alone in the drawing-room, when the well-known knock at the door alarmed her: she looked out, saw Lord Calorne, and immediately ran to the top of the stairs to stop the servant who should let him in: the impulse which she at the instant obeyed, was that of avoiding him; but having a few moments to deliberate, she scorned the idea of excusing herself to him, or the customary falsehood of saying she was out: she meant him to know it was to *him* she was not at home, and therefore told the footman to say, if she was inquired for, that she had given orders to be denied. Notwithstanding she wished to be out of hearing of his voice, she had not power to stir from the place where she was: she heard herself asked for:—she heard her answer given, and Lord Calorne say in reply,—I am sure Miss Fitzarthur is at home:—the servant said it was true, but that she had ordered him to deny her.—Are you to deny her to every one? said Lord Calorne.—I don't know, my Lord, answered the man, Miss Fitzarthur, when your lordship knocked, told me to deny her. Lord Calorne said no more, and went away; while Constance, who had not imagined so much would be said, almost repented having authorized such rudeness to him:
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a little recollection nevertheless convinced her that if she had erred it was on the safe side, and that any wish to keep terms with him who had broken all with her, could arise only from a weak partiality of which she ought to be ashamed.

C H A P. XXXI.

OFFICIOUSNESS.

IN the evening Mrs. Stavenell and her niece were without company, a circumstance which afforded a favourable opportunity of repeating her wish to leave London: she told Mrs. Stavenell she was sure while she staid in town her health would not mend, for if her indisposition was the consequence of a different manner of living, nothing was so likely to restore her as returning to the life she had quitted: her aunt heard her patiently, and when she paused in expectation of a reply, looking at her with a sarcastic smile, said;—Pray, my dear, is Lord Calorne a going out of town?—I do not know, Madam, replied Constance reddening, why should you ask me?—I know nothing of his intentions.—Nay, returned Mrs. Stavenell, don't be angry; I thought as that might be the reason of

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your wishing to leave me. Still more distressed and confused, she answered that Lord Calorne's conduct could not possibly bias hers.—I beg your pardon, said Mrs. Stavenell, I didn't know if he mightn't visit again at Marstonbury; but I durst to say when he's told as you're there, he'll come, if it's only for the sake of seeing the house, you know.—Constance, heartily vexed, sat silent, while her aunt continuing her style of raillery, said,—Why, my dear, do you think nobody ever see Lord Calorne was in love with you? or do you suppose we all thought as you hated him?—Indeed, Madam, Constance confusedly answered, you are mistaken if you imagine—I will not deny—O, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, I don't mean to ask any more questions:—if you've a mind to be so much upon the reserve, well and good;—you shall have my free leave and licence:—I don't intend to interfere, only take care of yourself; if you don't chuse to take advice you'll have nobody to blame but yourself, for I think when its come to such a proposal, its too late to give advice.—Seeing the effect what she said had on Constance, she added—I'm sorry I distress you, for you seem to me to be vastly confounded.

It was now beyond a doubt certain that Lord Calorne's intentions were disclosed, and Constance had no means left to defend herself from a charge of great imprudence and dissingenuity, except that of relating the whole transaction; as it was her request

request that it should be a secret, she was at liberty to reveal it; it was at this moment necessary, and with tolerable firmness she began by saying,—Whatever, Madam, you may think, I assure you—Here Mrs. Stavenell interrupted her, by telling her that she needed none of her assurances; that as she had hitherto been so cautious she might still be so; and that she desired she would, as it would be very disagreeable to her to be made a party in the affair.—After such a repulse, had it been a topic Constance wished to converse on, it was impossible to proceed: she therefore reverted to that of the return home, and in express terms requested that she might be permitted to write that night to her mother.—To this Mrs. Stavenell did not appear very averse, only bidding her consider how she would go, and advising her to desire Sir Edward to send somebody up to fetch her. Had she yielded to this, it would have occasioned a delay of several days; she therefore said she wished to set out as soon as she could, and that if her aunt would spare the maid-servant who had waited on her, to accompany her, she could go very safely in post-chaises. Mrs. Stavenell said she might do as she liked, and Constance determined to write immediately, and to leave London in three days at farthest.

She was going out of the room to put in execution what she had proposed, when at the stair-head she met Lord Farnford: such an abrupt en-

trance was too familiar with him to surprize her ; he stopt her, and led her back : vexed at being thus disagreeably detained, she made many efforts to get away ; but Mrs. Stavenell saying she would have time enough to write before the post went out, she was obliged to sit down and join in the conversation.—Do you know, my lord, said her aunt, that Constance is going to run away from us ?—she's resolved, and I can't prevent it.—What hemisphere, replied his lordship ridiculously, does Miss Fitzarthur purpose illuminating ? it will be a Lapland winter with us till she returns.—Were your lordship's question, said she, stripped of its poetical ornaments, it might I suppose be answered by my saying I am going home.—My dear Madam, returned Lord Farnford, from your gravity, I should, had I not been better informed, have concluded that your journey was not perfectly your own choice ;—but tell me how can you be so cruel as to leave us just when London is in its meridian glory.—I leave town, said Constance, in hopes of better health in the country.—Better health ! his lordship repeated, why town is the only place for young ladies to be well in :—you are running away from advice :—why you will die with moping in the country.—Rather, answered she, I shall recover by it, for I am now wholly unfit to partake of any of the amusements in London.—Well, said Lord Farnford, if it is resolved on, and for your advantage, it ought not to be opposed :

posed :—pray when do you go?—As soon as I can, Constance replied, the day is not yet fixed.—After a pause of some seconds, he asked her how she went, and whether she waited for any body to fetch her, or purposed travelling alone.

Mrs. Stavenell told him what her niece's scheme was, and added that she wished he could prevail on her to wait for better company.—Lord Farnford again was silent for some moments, and then said ; —Though I have found small encouragement to attempt prevailing on Miss Fitzarthur, I was just thinking of a plan which appears to me preferable to her's :—I intend setting out for the country myself to-morrow, and as it is not above a morning's ride from my house to Marstonbury, if Miss Fitzarthur would for once so far honour me as to trust me, I would undertake to conduct her safe home.—Mrs. Stavenell appeared to like the proposal, but Constance immediately, with thanks for the intended kindness, rejected it ; she said she could not possibly get ready for such a journey by the next day, nor could she think of going without preparing Sir Edward and Lady Barbara for seeing her.—The first objection was rendered of no force by Mrs. Stavenell undertaking that she should be ready ; the other Lord Farnford surmounted, by promising to send a servant before them to Marstonbury ; but Constance who had better reasons than these for refusing, was resolute in declining the civility : she knew well to what solicitations she might be exposed

posed when opportunity so favoured him, and had been too often irritated by his presumption, to be beholden to him for his protection.—I see, said he, Miss Fitzarthur's reason for objecting to my proposal she imagines that, without her, I should travel alone, and she has no confidence in me : she can surely have no fears when I tell her my sisters will go with me : we shall be three only, and they will I am certain be very happy in having her company.—Mrs. Stavenell now justly observed that such an opportunity was not to be neglected because it might hurry her a little ; and her niece satisfied of her security while in the presence of Lady Maria Peryton, no longer refused it : preliminaries were immediately settled, Lord Farnford's carriage was to call her, and she turned her thoughts wholly to preparing for her departure.

C H A P. XXXII.

C R O S S P U R P O S E S.

THE indisposition of the human mind to be satisfied is never more observable than when we have gained that which we regarded whilst out of our

our reach, as the summit of our wishes : elevation extends our prospect, and, if any thing before us appears desirable, we immediately pursue it : if we are obliged to confess we have nothing more to wish for, we imbitter our happiness by reflecting that the situation we have quitted had advantages wanting to that we have attained. From this weakness of humanity Constance was not exempt : in the morning she had looked forward to her return to Marstonbury as the sure and only means of removing the oppression of her mind, and restoring her native tranquillity ; and, now that her wish was nearly accomplished, she could not think of leaving Mrs. Stavenell's house, and bidding adieu to the many pleasures she had enjoyed there, without regret : this, which she thought childish folly, she combated by considering herself as incapable of any longer deriving pleasure from those objects which had occasioned it, and by the hope of again enjoying that felicity which she imagined inseparable from a residence at her father's ; there was however one circumstance which no prospect of advantage to herself could enable her to think on with any degree of complacence ; the moment was at hand when she must, if she meant to live in tolerable peace, tear from her heart all regard for, and all remembrance of Lord Calorne : she was on the point of quitting him for ever, and in such a separation she found little to console her, except the approbation of her conscience—a consolation which

which we cannot wonder she then thought inadequate to her necessity of support. She passed the night in the most tumultuous perturbation, sometimes endeavouring to strengthen her mind by reflecting on the propriety of the resolution she had taken, and at others sinking with dread lest she had too lightly suspected him : of this indeed there appeared very little reason to be apprehensive, what she had learned of Lord Calorné was too well attested to admit the shadow of a doubt ; and, supposing the story of his intended marriage were false, yet any one circumstance that Miss Greyburne had communicated was sufficient to criminate him : at length wearied with weighing possibility against probability, and hoping, that, whatever were the issue, her intentions would justify her, she determined steadily to persevere, and was much comforted in thinking, that the space between her concluding on her journey and the time for putting it in execution was so short as entirely to secure her from any necessity of herself bidding Lord Calorné a last farewell.

Before she left her chamber in the morning, the following note was brought to her :

‘ Miss Greyburne presents her most respectful compliments to Miss Fitzarthur, and begs she will not trouble herself to mention to Lord Calorné the business on which she had the honour of conversing with her about a fortnight ago, as
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‘ she learn’t last night his lordship is shortly to be married to Miss Ecklew.’

She now heartily rejoiced in her having been acquainted with this manœuvre of Lord Calorne’s before, as the shock was much lessened : she felt it however ; it renewed in her mind sensations which had almost ceased to harass her ; but she was able to bear it, and it rendered less painful the idea of quitting him for ever : he was, she thought so metamorphosed, that any regard for him in his present state was inconsistent with the sincere esteem she entertained for him while she believed him what she would have him be ; and endeavouring to rouse her indignation at his want of principle, and her contempt of his artful hypocrisy, she perhaps too hastily concluded her hatred of him sincere.

The conflict was yet severe, though she was firm, but her fortitude had not undergone it’s last test : after breakfast she was called down to the parlour to a person whom she had sent for to pay a small bill to : this business was just dispatched, the person was going, and both the house door and that of the parlour were open, when Lord Calorne entered the hall, and asked if she was within : the servant said—Yes—and before Constance could muster the least particle of courage, his lordship was in the parlour :—she turned pale, trembled from head to foot, and was silent :—the servant set chairs and quitted the room :—Lord Calorne began—I fear—I am very sorry—paused, and appeared

peared almost equally embarrassed.—Constance could no longer support herself standing, she dropped into a chair, and he walked from her :—she took the advantage of his back being towards her, to recall her scattered senses, take out her handkerchief, and assume some degree of composure :—in a few seconds he seated himself opposite to her, and said in a tone of calm severity—I am afraid Miss Fitzarthur, you think me very rude to trouble you with a visit after you had given orders to be denied to me; but I will rather risk any thing than forego the last satisfaction I expect from our acquaintance :—you have penetration enough to discern a change in my behaviour; you cannot, I am sure be at a loss for the cause, but I see you affect to resent it.—I will not inquire which of us has the most reason to be offended; I am hurt at your conduct, yet I bear you no ill-will, and though I must resign all the hopes I once cherished, I will still be your friend, and, with your permission your adviser.—What can have been the motive to your capricious change of conduct I cannot guess: you have ruined my peace, but I will not reproach you.

Lord Calorne might have gone on till midnight without any interruption from his auditor: he saw her countenance alter, and the tears start in her eyes, as she leaned with her hand under her cheek, and he stopped.

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The agitation of her mind was now forced to find a remedy, and she cried vehemently; he then, lowering his tone of voice, and coming to her as if disarmed of his anger, tried to soothe her.—I cannot bear you should be in tears, said he, all shall be forgotten: perhaps I have been too blame, suffer me only to convince you of your danger, and every painful remembrance shall be obliterated.

Her spirit now rose: whatever was the fact, she would not encourage him to believe he could at pleasure cause or remove her sorrow, and angry at his attempts to console her, she rose, and turning from him, said—I know not what your lordship means by your reproaches, unless it is to prevent mine: your language is unintelligible: but I can understand enough to warn me to expect the greatest danger where I thought myself the most secure.—I see the precipice I stand on, and will immediately withdraw from it.—This, replied Lord Calorne is all I wish; you will then excite my admiration as much as you have done my pity: let all that has passed be buried in oblivion: and do not add to my many causes of vexation that of seeing you unhappy. I own I came here with a resolution to take an eternal farewell of you, but I shall now—However easy, interrupted Constance, your lordship may find it to forget because you do not chuse to remember, it is an ability I cannot boast: the sense of what has passed will, as long as I live, remain

main on my mind, and it is out of my power to cancel it : I am ashamed, heartily ashamed of a weakness which you have basely taken advantage of.—You cannot say, returned he, that I have taken advantage of it : do not, my dear madam, let your sorrow exceed its cause : I knew whatever might dictate for a moment, a very short consideration would act as it has done ; but, he continued, taking her hand and smiling at her, you shall not go without punishment for what you have made me suffer. It is, Miss Fitzarthur, in your power to make me such an atonement as will annihilate your error, and such an one as I shall think all that gratitude can do to express obligation too little to acknowledge. The load on my heart is insupportable ; I have ten thousand anxieties which you only can remove : the whole consequence of my conduct I will take on myself, and can brave every misfortune excepting that of losing you : will you consent to marry me immediately.

Indignation at such unparalleled effrontery came now to Miss Fitzarthur's aid, and gave her the courage she wanted : recovering her hand she replied—Your lordship's opinion of me must be still lower than ever, if you could promise yourself success from a repetition of a proposal I have, for such good reasons rejected : they were then such as nothing could overcome, and they are strengthened ten-fold now : that you may believe me sincere, I will tell you I have heard of your connection

tion, and of your base design to impose on me and subject me to contempt and ridicule :—you must think me very much my own enemy if I can, after what I have learned, entertain a moment's wish for any farther intercourse with you : the honour you once offered me is now an insult ; to say I do not feel it, would be pretending to a degree of fortitude which I have not ; but I have enough to warrant my saying, that as I hope for mercy, none of your artful entreaties shall prevail on me : you have used me most contemptuously, and I am not so blinded as not to see it.—Good God ! said Lord Calorne, what do you mean ? I deny that I ever wished to impose on you—had you not shunned me, and refused to see me, you should have known every particular of my situation, and to what extremities I am driven :—my connection, as you call it, I would before now have informed you of, and have many times resolved to do it, but have always been deterred by an idea that, if your regard for me was such as without presumption I may say it ought to have been, you would be hurt at hearing of it ; and credulously believing you had a very refined sense of honour, I feared you would, while it existed still refuse me :—to spare what I then thought would be both to you and myself a very distressing scene, and hoping that I might be able to disentangle myself, I was silent. But how ill, Miss Fitzarthur, does this excessive resentment become you !

you ! how ill does it sort with the encouragement, the very flattering encouragement you have given me, and with the sentiments you have expressed ! I must attribute your anger to my *not* having made use of the advantage you offered me ; but ardently as I love you, I would rather bid you adieu for ever than violate the faith your family have in me—you are my friend's, my hospitable benefactor's daughter, and how could I ever dare to call him so had I perfidy enough to employ, as many would have done, the power you gave me ?

And can you, said Constance, almost choaked with contending passions, can you, base Lord Calorne, upbraid me with my affection for you ?—can you pretend to despise me for it ? or will you dare to say that any one of my actions was not warranted by the engagement between us ?—had I consented to the scandalous marriage you so urged, you might have blamed me : how could I then have borne your reproaches and those of my conscience ? and what reason have I to thank Heaven that preserved me from your snare ! let me stand as a warning to the credulous :—all arts were used to engage my affection, and I am not only despised secretly for their success, but openly upbraided with it.

The inconsistency of your conduct, replied Lord Calorne, astonishes me, and I know not what to resolve on.—I love you—you know I do ; all you do cannot prevent it : I would do any thing to preserve

preserve your peace of mind, tell me how shall I best do this?—By leaving me, she answered; I scorn your hypocritical overtures, and pretended regard: you have given additional strength to my resolution, and enabled me to tell you this is the last time I shall see you.—I acknowledge, and make what advantage you can of it, that on your account I have suffered greatly—it has cost me much pains to root out an affection which had its foundation in the sincerest esteem; but I have done it, and shall quit London, and I hope all remembrance of your lordship, together:—I have neither spirits nor time for farther useless altercation: I have some directions to give before I leave town, and I expect the carriage presently. Saying these words, and fearing her own ability to stand a longer trial, she was passing Lord Calorne, when he stopping her, asked her if she was really going.—Really, she replied.—Whither? he asked.—Home, she answered, and as she said so, Lord Farnford's coach came to the door.—You are not going in that carriage? said he; it is Lord Farnford's—you are not surely going with him?—It is not of any importance to your lordship, she replied, again attempting to pass him, how or with whom I am going.—It is of importance, to me, he returned warmly; Miss Fitzarthur you must not, you shall not go: you mean to punish me to the extreme—more than I can bear:—you must not leave me:—forgive what is past, as I do—do not go—I shall lose every support.—

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I will forgive you, answered Constance, tenderness for a moment predominating, but I must go, you have forced me to it, and I cannot, I will not retract.—Let me then follow you, said Lord Calorne.—On no consideration, she replied, I will not see you if you do.—May I write to you? he asked.—She answered—No.—This is injustice, said he: suffer me to write to you and I will explain every thing,—I positively will not, she returned: your lordship shall not find me through the whole of my character, the flexible dupe you have thought me: you may expect, if you chuse to write to me, to have your letters returned unopened.

At this instant Constance was relieved by a message from Lord Farnford and his sisters, telling her they waited for her, she sent word she was coming immediately, and would have followed the servant; but Lord Calorne shutting the door, and setting his foot against it, said—And you are really going, and forbid all communication between us? your resentment in my opinion far exceeds the offence, and must have some other foundation; remember, Miss Fitzarthur, we meet now for the last time; and let us take care that we have no cause to reproach ourselves: can you, do you think, in your cooler moments justify to yourself the step you are now about to take? can you think it proper to trust to the protection of a man whom you have frequently declared unworthy of all confidence? you will repent

pent it, believe me :—let me entreat you not to go; or, if you will go, not to go with *him*.—Whatever Lord Farnford may be, she replied, he has no hypocrisy : I will venture.—Then I know the cause of your severity to me, said Lord Calorne :—you threatened me, and you have carried your threat into execution ;—but remember the promise you have given me—you are mine, you cannot give yourself to another.—I cannot stay, Constance answered, to hear your reproaches.—Then go, rejoined his Lordship : all I ask is one hour's reflection on your conduct towards me when you arrive at Marstonbury—you will then, perhaps, think you have used me very ill.

The conversation ended before either of the parties was aware that they perfectly misunderstood each other : her heart was too full for reply, and she was scarcely herself when Lord Farnford came in to fetch her : he addressed Lord Calorne with an air of saucy triumph, and very familiarly urged her to get ready : she made a painful effort, went out of the room, and heard Lord Calorne go away instantly. To avoid the inquiries of curiosity, which her appearance would have excited, she went to her chamber and endeavoured to compose her features, but this was not easily to be done ; and obliged to yield to the commotions within, which were occasioned by various militating passions, she sat down and cried ; after which regale she gave some incoherent orders to her maid, and then went

to the company, who she soon found were apprised of the visitor she had had.

Her aunt, when she had bid her adieu, strongly invited her to a second residence with her, to which Constance could return no other answer than thanks and tears : she repented too sincerely having ever quitted her native home to engage to do so again, and though she was far from concluding the world in general bad, she could not think an acquaintance with it desirable, nor that the having gained experience was so advantageous, as the having been deceived was cruel.

Hope had beckoned her, curiosity had impelled her, and peace had accompanied her to London : she was now chased from it by despair and disappointment, and the place of her fair tutelary was usurped by the jarring trio regret, sorrow and discontent, instead of the tranquil, elastic, bounding heart she had brought with her, she carried back one made flaccid by sensibility, irritated by conflict, and almost severed in attaining a branch of knowledge which she would gladly have been without, and the conviction that there is no form which vice cannot assume for the purpose of deception, no reliances to be placed on external appearances of virtue,

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE Author from a conjunction of circumstances, being necessitated to refer the correction of the press to a person, in the opinion of whose care she was deceived, thinks herself obliged to apologize for the errors that have crept into the work. She therefore begs her readers to accept her excuse and apply to the errata prefixed to each volume.

ERRATA. VOL. I.

Preface for *inoxious* r. *innoxious*, *ingenuous* r. *ingenious*, P. 8, l. 18, for *this* r. *his*, p. 18, l. 18, dele *of*, p. 24, l. 12, for *was* r. *were*, p. 42, l. 7, after *those* insert *might make*, p. 65, l. 27, for *a* read *no*, p. 78, l. 14, for *was* r. *were*, l. 23, for *overgrown* r. *outgrown*, p. 82, l. 17, after *be* insert *too*, p. 94, l. 15, for *time* read *price*, p. 99, l. 7, dele *in*, p. 105, l. 12, for *meridian* r. *meridiem*, p. 122, l. 20, for *she* r. *he*, p. 129, l. 24, for *convey* r. *convoy*, p. 131, l. 12, for *was* r. *were*, p. 170, l. 27, after *then* insert *to*, p. 172, l. 17, dele *of*, p. 201, last l. for *sat* r. *set*, p. 214, l. 10, for *a*, r. *her*, p. 215, l. 11, for *at* r. *in*, p. 237, l. 11, for *presentment* r. *presentiment*, p. 238, l. 15, for *as* read *and*, l. 21, for *suspiciously* r. *particularly*, p. 251, l. 28, for *what* r. *as scrupulously*, l. 29, after *doubt*, insert *what*, p. 262, l. 7, for *as* r. *one*, p. 263, l. 2, for *closely* r. *slowly*, p. 276, l. 1. for *familiar* r. *usual*.

— to the servant, who she found was a